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POETICAL WORKS

VOL. II.

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ROBERT BROWNING'S

POETICAL WORKS

VOL. II.

Completing Volume III. and IV. of the
Edition in 12 Volumes

Robert Browning.

1835.

THE POETICAL WORKS

of

ROBERT BROWNING

VOL. III.

PIPPA PASSES
KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES
THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES
A SOUL'S TRAGEDY

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE
1902

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PIPPA PASSES;

A DRAMA

I DEDICATE MY BEST INTENTIONS IN THIS POEM,
ADMIRINGLY TO THE AUTHOR OF 'ION,'
AFFECTIONATELY TO MR. SERGEANT TALFOURD

R. B.

LONDON: 1841.

PERSONS.

PIPPA.
OTTIMA.
SEBALD.
Foreign Students.
GOTTLIEB.
SCHRAMM.
JULES.
PHENE.
Austrian Police.
BLUPHOCKS.
LUIGI *and his* Mother.
Poor Girls.
MONSIGNOR *and his Attendants.*

PIPPA PASSES.

1841.

INTRODUCTION.

NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO IN THE TREVISAN.

SCENE.—*A large mean airy chamber. A girl,* PIPPA, *from the Silk-mills, springing out of bed.*

DAY!
Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last:
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurting and suppressed it lay,
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid gray
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away;
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the world.

Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,
A mite of my twelve hours' treasure,
The least of thy gazes or glances,
(Be they grants thou art bound to or gifts above measure)
One of thy choices or one of thy chances,
(Be they tasks God imposed thee or freaks at thy pleasure)
—My Day, if I squander such labour or leisure,
Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me!

Thy long blue solemn hours serenely flowing,
Whence earth, we feel, gets steady help and good—
Thy fitful sunshine-minutes, coming, going,
As if earth turned from work in gamesome mood—
All shall be mine! But thou must treat me not
As prosperous ones are treated, those who live
At hand here, and enjoy the higher lot,
In readiness to take what thou wilt give,
And free to let alone what thou refusest;
For, Day, my holiday, if thou ill-usest
Me, who am only Pippa,—old-year's sorrow.
Cast off last night, will come again to-morrow:
Whereas, if thou prove gentle, I shall borrow
Sufficient strength of thee for new-year's sorrow.
All other men and women that this earth
Belongs to, who all days alike possess,

Make general plenty cure particular dearth,
Get more joy one way, if another, less:
Thou art my single day, God lends to leaven
What were all earth else, with a feel of heaven,—
Sole light that helps me through the year, thy sun's!
Try now! Take Asolo's Four Happiest Ones—
And let thy morning rain on that superb
Great haughty Ottima; can rain disturb
Her Sebald's homage? All the while thy rain
Beats fiercest on her shrub-house window-pane,
He will but press the closer, breathe more warm
Against her cheek; how should she mind the storm?
And, morning past, if mid-day shed a gloom
O'er Jules and Phene,—what care bride and groom
Save for their dear selves? 'T is their marriage-day;
And while they leave church and go home their way,
Hand clasping hand, within each breast would be
Sunbeams and pleasant weather spite of thee.
Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve
With mist,—will Luigi and his mother grieve—
The lady and her child, unmatched, forsooth,
She in her age, as Luigi in his youth,
For true content? The cheerful town, warm, close
And safe, the sooner that thou art morose,
Receives them. And yet once again, outbreak
In storm at night on Monsignor, they make

Such stir about,—whom they expect from Rome
To visit Asolo, his brothers' home,
And say here masses proper to release
A soul from pain,—what storm dares hurt his peace?
Calm would he pray, with his own thoughts to ward
Thy thunder off, nor want the angels' guard.
But Pippa—just one such mischance would spoil
Her day that lightens the next twelvemonth's toil
At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil!
And here I let time slip for nought!
Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam, caught
With a single splash from my ewer!
You that would mock the best pursuer,
Was my basin over-deep?
One splash of water ruins you asleep,
And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits
Wheeling and counterwheeling,
Reeling, broken beyond healing:
Now grow together on the ceiling!
That will task your wits.
Whoever it was quenched fire first, hoped to see
Morsel after morsel flee
As merrily, as giddily . . .
Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,
Where settles by degrees the radiant cripple?
Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon?

New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,
Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk bird's poll!
Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the ripple
Of ocean, bud there,—fairies watch unroll
Such turban-flowers; I say, such lamps disperse
Thick red flame through that dusk green universe!
I am queen of thee, floweret!
And each fleshy blossom
Preserve I not—(safer
Than leaves that embower it,
Or shells that embosom)
—From weevil and chafer?
Laugh through my pane then; solicit the bee;
Gibe him, be sure; and, in midst of thy glee,
Love thy queen, worship me!

—Worship whom else? For am I not, this day,
Whate'er I please? What shall I please to-day?
My morn, noon, eve and night—how spend my day?
To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,
The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk:
But, this one day, I have leave to go,
And play out my fancy's fullest games;
I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—
That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the names
Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo!

See! Up the hill-side yonder, through the morning,
Some one shall love me, as the world calls love:
I am no less than Ottima, take warning!
The gardens, and the great stone house above,
And other house for shrubs, all glass in front,
Are mine; where Sebald steals, as he is wont,
To court me, while old Luca yet reposes:
And therefore, till the shrub-house door uncloses,
I . . . what now?—give abundant cause for prate
About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,
Too bold, too confident she 'll still face down
The spitefullest of talkers in our town.
How we talk in the little town below!

But love, love, love—there 's better love, I know!
This foolish love was only day's first offer;
I choose my next love to defy the scoffer:
For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally
Out of Possagno church at noon?
Their house looks over Orcana valley:
Why should not I be the bride as soon
As Ottima? For I saw, beside,
Arrive last night that little bride—
Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash
Of the pale snow-pure cheek and black bright tresses,
Blacker than all except the black eyelash;
I wonder she contrives those lids no dresses!

—So strict was she, the veil
Should cover close her pale
Pure cheeks—a bride to look at and scarce touch,
Scarce touch, remember, Jules! For are not such
Used to be tended, flower-like, every feature,
As if one's breath would fray the lily of a creature?
A soft and easy life these ladies lead:
Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed.
Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,
Keep that foot its lady primness,
Let those ankles never swerve
From their exquisite reserve,
Yet have to trip along the streets like me,
All but naked to the knee!
How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss
So startling as her real first infant kiss?
Oh, no—not envy, this!

—Not envy, sure!—for if you gave me
Leave to take or to refuse,
In earnest, do you think I 'd choose
That sort of new love to enslave me?
Mine should have lapped me round from the beginning;
As little fear of losing it as winning:
Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their wives,
And only parents' love can last our lives.

At eve the Son and Mother, gentle pair,
Commune inside our turret: what prevents
My being Luigi? While that mossy lair
Of lizards through the winter-time is stirred
With each to each imparting sweet intents
For this new-year, as brooding bird to bird—
(For I observe of late, the evening walk
Of Luigi and his mother, always ends
Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,
Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than friends)
—Let me be cared about, kept out of harm,
And schemed for, safe in love as with a charm;
Let me be Luigi! If I only knew
What was my mother's face—my father, too!
Nay, if you come to that, best love of all
Is God's; then why not have God's love befall
Myself as, in the palace by the Dome,
Monsignor?—who to-night will bless the home
Of his dead brother; and God bless in turn
That heart which beats, those eyes which mildly burn
With love for all men! I, to-night at least,
Would be that holy and beloved priest.

Now wait!—even I already seem to share
In God's love: what does New-year's hymn declare?
What other meaning do these verses bear?

All service ranks the same with God:
If now, as formerly he trod
Paradise, his presence fills
Our earth, each only as God wills
Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,
Are we; there is no last nor first.

Say not "a small event!" Why "small"?
Costs it more pain that this, ye call
A "great event," should come to pass,
Than that? Untwine me from the mass
Of deeds which make up life, one deed
Power shall fall short in or exceed!

And more of it, and more of it!—oh yes—
I will pass each, and see their happiness,
And envy none—being just as great, no doubt,
Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!
A pretty thing to care about
So mightily, this single holiday!
But let the sun shine! Wherefore repine?
—With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,
Down the grass path grey with dew,
Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,
Where the swallow never flew
Nor yet cicala dared carouse—
No, dared carouse! [*She enters the street.*

PART I

MORNING.

SCENE.—*Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-house.* LUCA'S *wife*, OTTIMA, *and her paramour, the German* SEBALD.

Sebald [*sings*].

Let the watching lids wink!
Day 's a-blaze with eyes, think!
Deep into the night, drink!

Ottima. Night? Such may be your Rhine-land nights perhaps;
But this blood-red beam through the shutter's chink
—We call such light, the morning: let us see!
Mind how you grope your way, though! How these tall
Naked geraniums straggle! Push the lattice
Behind that frame!—Nay, do I bid you?—Sebald,
It shakes the dust down on me! Why, of course
The slide-bolt catches. Well, are you content,
Or must I find you something else to spoil?
Kiss and be friends, my Sebald! Is 't full morning?
Oh, don't speak then!

Sebald. Ay, thus it used to be.
Ever your house was, I remember, shut
Till mid-day; I observed that, as I strolled
On mornings through the vale here; country girls
Were noisy, washing garments in the brook,
Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the hills:
But no, your house was mute, would ope no eye.
And wisely: you were plotting one thing there,
Nature, another outside. I looked up—
Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron bars,
Silent as death, blind in a flood of light.
Oh, I remember!—and the peasants laughed
And said, "The old man sleeps with the young wife."
This house was his, this chair, this window—his.

Ottima. Ah, the clear morning! I can see St. Mark's;
That black streak is the belfry. Stop: Vicenza
Should lie . . . there 's Padua, plain enough, that blue!
Look o'er my shoulder, follow my finger!

Sebald. Morning?
It seems to me a night with a sun added.
Where 's dew, where 's freshness? That bruised plant, I bruised
In getting through the lattice yestereve,
Droops as it did. See, here 's my elbow's mark
I' the dust o' the sill.

Ottima. Oh, shut the lattice, pray!

Sebald. Let me lean out. I cannot scent blood here,
Foul as the morn may be.
There, shut the world out!
How do you feel now, Ottima? There, curse
The world and all outside! Let us throw off
This mask: how do you bear yourself? Let 's out
With all of it.

Ottima. Best never speak of it.

Sebald. Best speak again and yet again of it,
Till words cease to be more than words. "His blood,"
For instance—let those two words mean "His blood"
And nothing more. Notice, I 'll say them now,
"His blood."

Ottima. Assuredly if I repented
The deed—

Sebald. Repent? Who should repent, or why?
What puts that in your head? Did I once say
That I repented?

Ottima. No, I said the deed . . .

Sebald. "The deed" and "the event"—just now it was
"Our passion's fruit"—the devil take such cant!
Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,
I am his cut-throat, you are . . .

Ottima. Here 's the wine;
I brought it when we left the house above,

And glasses too—wine of both sorts. Black? White then?

Sebald. But am not I his cut-throat? What are you?

Ottima. There trudges on his business from the Duomo
Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood
And bare feet; always in one place at church,
Close under the stone wall by the south entry.
I used to take him for a brown cold piece
Of the wall's self, as out of it he rose
To let me pass—at first, I say, I used:
Now, so has that dumb figure fastened on me.
I rather should account the plastered wall
A piece of him, so chilly does it strike.
This, Sebald?

Sebald. No, the white wine—the white wine!

Well, Ottima, I promised no new year
Should rise on us the ancient shameful way;
Nor does it rise. Pour on! To your black eyes!
Do you remember last damned New Year's day?

Ottima. You brought those foreign prints. We looked at them
Over the wine and fruit. I had to scheme
To get him from the fire. Nothing but saying
His own set wants the proof-mark, roused him up
To hunt them out.

Sebald. 'Faith, he is not alive

To fondle you before my face.

Ottima. Do you

Fondle me then! Who means to take your life

For that, my Sebald?

Sebald. Hark you, Ottima!

One thing to guard against. We 'll not make much

One of the other—that is, not make more

Parade of warmth, childish officious coil,

Than yesterday: as if, sweet, I supposed

Proof upon proof were needed now, now first,

To show I love you—yes, still love you—love you

In spite of Luca and what 's come to him

—Sure sign we had him ever in our thoughts,

White sneering old reproachful face and all!

We 'll even quarrel, love, at times, as if

We still could lose each other, were not tied

By this: conceive you?

Ottima. Love!

Sebald. Not tied so sure.

Because though I was wrought upon, have struck

His insolence back into him—am I

So surely yours?—therefore forever yours?

Ottima. Love, to be wise, (one counsel pays another)

Should we have—months ago, when first we loved,

For instance that May morning we two stole

Under the green ascent of sycamores—

If we had come upon a thing like that
Suddenly . . .
Sebald. ' A thing "—there again—" a thing ! "
Ottima. Then, Venus' body, had we come upon
My husband Luca Gaddi's murdered corpse
Within there, at his couch-foot, covered close—
Would you have pored upon it? Why persist
In poring now upon it? For 't is here
As much as there in the deserted house:
You cannot rid your eyes of it. For me,
Now he is dead I hate him worse: I hate . . .
Dare you stay here? I would go back and hold
His two dead hands, and say, " I hate you worse,
" Luca, than . . . "
Sebald. Off, off—take your hands off mine,
'T is the hot evening—off ! oh, morning is it?
Ottima. There 's one thing must be done; you know
what thing.
Come in and help to carry. We may sleep
Anywhere in the whole wide house to-night.
Sebald. What would come, think you, if we let him lie
Just as he is? Let him lie there until
The angels take him ! He is turned by this
Off from his face beside, as you will see.
Ottima. This dusty pane might serve for looking glass
Three, four—four grey hairs ! Is it so you said

A plait of hair should wave across my neck?
No—this way.

Sebald. Ottima, I would give your neck,
Each splendid shoulder, both those breasts of yours,
That this were undone! Killing! Kill the world
So Luca lives again!—ay, lives to sputter
His fulsome dotage on you—yes, and feign
Surprise that I return at eve to sup,
When all the morning I was loitering here—
Bid me despatch my business and begone.
I would . . .

Ottima. See!

Sebald. No, I 'll finish. Do you think
I fear to speak the bare truth once for all?
All we have talked of, is, at bottom, fine
To suffer; there 's a recompense in guilt;
One must be venturous and fortunate:
What is one young for, else? In age we 'll sigh
O'er the wild reckless wicked days flown over;
Still, we have lived: the vice was in its place.
But to have eaten Luca's bread, have worn
His clothes, have felt his money swell my purse—
Do lovers in romances sin that way?
Why, I was starving when I used to call
And teach you music, starving while you plucked me
These flowers to smell!

Ottima. My poor lost friend!

Sebald. He gave me
Life, nothing less: what if he did reproach
My perfidy, and threaten, and do more—
Had he no right? What was to wonder at?
He sat by us at table quietly:
Why must you lean across till our cheeks touched?
Could he do less than make pretence to strike?
'T is not the crime's sake—I 'd commit ten crimes
Greater, to have this crime wiped out, undone!
And you—O how feel you? Feel you for me?

Ottima. Well then, I love you better now than ever,
And best (look at me while I speak to you)—
Best for the crime; nor do I grieve, in truth.
This mask, this simulated ignorance,
This affectation of simplicity,
Falls off our crime; this naked crime of ours
May not now be looked over: look it down!
Great? let it be great; but the joys it brought,
Pay they or no its price? Come: they or it!
Speak not! The past, would you give up the past
Such as it is, pleasure and crime together?
Give up that noon I owned my love for you?
The garden's silence: even the single bee
Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopped,
And where he hid you only could surmise

By some campanula chalice set a-swing.
Who stammered—"Yes, I love you?"
Sebald. And I drew
Back; put far back your face with both my hands
Lest you should grow too full of me—your face
So seemed athirst for my whole soul and body!
Ottima. And when I ventured to receive you here,
Made you steal hither in the mornings—
Sebald. When
I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house here,
Till the red fire on its glazed windows spread
To a yellow haze?
Ottima. Ah—my sign was, the sun
Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut-tree
Nipped by the first frost.
Sebald. You would always laugh
At my wet boots: I had to stride thro' grass
Over my ankles.
Ottima. Then our crowning night!
Sebald. The July night?
Ottima. The day of it too, Sebald!
When heaven's pillars seemed o'erbowed with heat,
Its black-blue canopy suffered descend
Close on us both, to weigh down each to each,
And smother up all life except our life.
So lay we till the storm came.

Sebald. How it came!

Ottima. Buried in woods we lay, you recollect:
Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;
And ever and anon some bright white shaft
Burned thro' the pine-tree roof, here burned and there.
As if God's messenger thro' the close wood screen
Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture,
Feeling for guilty thee and me: then broke
The thunder like a whole sea overhead—

Sebald. Yes!

Ottima. —While I stretched myself upon you, hands
To hands, my mouth to your hot mouth, and shook
All my locks loose, and covered you with them—
You, Sebald, the same you!

Sebald. Slower, Ottima!

Ottima. And as we lay—

Sebald. Less vehemently! Love me!
Forgive me! Take not words, mere words, to heart!
Your breath is worse than wine! Breathe slow, speak slow!
Do not lean on me!

Ottima. Sebald, as we lay,
Rising and falling only with our pants,
Who said, "Let death come now! 'T is right to die!
"Right to be punished! Nought completes such bliss
"But woe!" Who said that?

Sebald. How did we ever rise?
Was 't that we slept? Why did it end?
Ottima. I felt you
Taper into a point the ruffled ends
Of my loose locks 'twixt both your humid lips.
My hair is fallen now: knot it again!
Sebald. I kiss you now, dear Ottima, now and now!
This way? Will you forgive me—be once more
My great queen?
Ottima. Bind it thrice about my brow;
Crown me your queen, your spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent in sin. Say that!
Sebald. I crown you
My great white queen, my spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent . . .

[*From without is heard the voice of* PIPPA, *singing*—

The year 's at the spring
And day 's at the morn;
Morning 's at seven;
The hill-side 's dew-pearled;
The lark 's on the wing;
The snail 's on the thorn:
God 's in his heaven—
All 's right with the world!

[PIPPA *passes.*

Sebald. God 's in his heaven! Do you hear that?
Who spoke?

You, you spoke !

Ottima. Oh—that little ragged girl !

She must have rested on the step : we give them
But this one holiday the whole year round.
Did you ever see our silk-mills—their inside ?
There are ten silk-mills now belong to you.
She stoops to pick my double heartsease . . . Sh!
She does not hear : call you out louder !

Sebald. Leave me !

Go, get your clothes on—dress those shoulders !

Ottima. Sebald?

Sebald. Wipe off that paint ! I hate you.

Ottima. Miserable !

Sebald. My God, and she is emptied of it now !

Outright now !—how miraculously gone
All of the grace—had she not strange grace once ?
Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as it likes
No purpose holds the features up together,
Only the cloven brow and puckered chin
Stay in their places : and the very hair,
That seemed to have a sort of life in it.
Drops, a dead web !

Ottima. Speak to me—not of me !

Sebald. —That round great full-orbed face, where not
an angle
Broke the delicious indolence—all broken !

Ottima. To me—not of me! Ungrateful, perjured cheat!
A coward too: but ingrate 's worse than all.
Beggar—my slave—a fawning, cringing lie!
Leave me! Betray me! I can see your drift!
A lie that walks and eats and drinks!
Sebald. My God!
Those morbid olive faultless shoulder-blades—
I should have known there was no blood beneath!
Ottima. You hate me then? You hate me then?
Sebald. To think
She would succeed in her absurd attempt,
And fascinate by sinning, show herself
Superior—guilt from its excess superior
To innocence! That little peasant's voice
Has righted all again. Though I be lost,
I know which is the better, never fear,
Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,
Nature or trick! I see what I have done,
Entirely now! Oh I am proud to feel
Such torments—let the world take credit thence—
I, having done my deed, pay too its price!
I hate, hate—curse you! God 's in his heaven!
Ottima. —Me!
Me! no, no, Sebald, not yourself—kill me!
Mine is the whole crime. Do but kill me—then

Yourself—then—presently—first hear me speak!
I always meant to kill myself—wait, you!
Lean on my breast—not as a breast; don't love me
The more because you lean on me, my own
Heart's Sebald! There, there, both deaths presently:

Sebald. My brain is drowned now—quite drowned
all I feel
Is . . . is, at swift-recurring intervals,
A hurry-down within me, as of waters
Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit:
There they go—whirls from a black fiery sea!

Ottima. Not me—to him, O God, be merciful!

Talk by the way, while PIPPA *is passing from the hill-side to Orcana. Foreign* Students *of painting and sculpture, from Venice, assembled opposite the house of* JULES, *a young French statuary, at Possagno.*

1st Student. Attention! My own post is beneath this window, but the pomegranate clump yonder will hide three or four of you with a little squeezing, and Schramm and his pipe must lie flat in the balcony. Four, five—who 's a defaulter? We want everybody, for Jules must not be suffered to hurt his bride when the jest 's found out.

2nd Student. All here! Only our poet's away—never having much meant to be present, moonstrike him! The airs of that fellow, that Giovacchino! He was in violent love with himself, and had a fair prospect of thriving in his suit, so unmolested was it,—when suddenly a woman falls in love with him, too; and out of pure jealousy he takes himself off to Trieste, immortal poem and all: whereto is this prophetical epitaph appended already, as Bluphocks assures me,—"*Here a mammoth-poem lies, Fouled to death by butterflies.*" His own fault, the simpleton! Instead of cramp couplets, each like a knife in your entrails, he should write, says Bluphocks, both classically and intelligibly. —*Æsculapius, an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs: Hebe's plaister—One strip Cools your lip. Phœbus' emulsion—One bottle Clears your throttle. Mercury's bolus—One box Cures . . .*

3rd Student. Subside, my fine fellow! If the marriage was over by ten o'clock, Jules will certainly be here in a minute with his bride.

2nd Student. Good!—only, so should the poet's muse have been universally acceptable, says Bluphocks, *et canibus nostris . . .* and Delia not better known to our literary dogs than the boy Giovacchino!

1st Student. To the point, now. Where's Gottlieb, the new-comer? Oh,—listen, Gottlieb, to what has called

down this piece of friendly vengeance on Jules, of which we now assemble to witness the winding-up. We are all agreed, all in a tale, observe, when Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by and by: I am spokesman—the verses that are to undeceive Jules bear my name of Lutwyche —but each professes himself alike insulted by this strutting stone-squarer, who came alone from Paris to Munich, and thence with a crowd of us to Venice and Possagno here, but proceeds in a day or two alone again—oh, alone indubitably!—to Rome and Florence. He, forsooth, take up his portion with these dissolute, brutalized, heartless bunglers!—so he was heard to call us all: now, is Schramm brutalized, I should like to know? Am I heartless?

Gottlieb. Why, somewhat heartless; for, suppose Jules a coxcomb as much as you choose, still, for this mere coxcombry, you will have brushed off—what do folks style it?—the bloom of his life. Is it too late to alter? These love-letters now, you call his—I can't laugh at them.

4th Student. Because you never read the sham letters of our inditing which drew forth these.

Gottlieb. His discovery of the truth will be frightful.

4th Student. That 's the joke. But you should have joined us at the beginning: there 's no doubt he loves the girl—loves a model he might hire by the hour!

Gottlieb. See here! "He has been accustomed," he writes, "to have Canova's women about him, in stone, "and the world's women beside him, in flesh; these "being as much below, as those above, his soul's aspi- "ration: but now he is to have the reality." There you laugh again! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

1st Student. Schramm! (Take the pipe out of his mouth, somebody!) Will Jules lose the bloom of his youth?

Schramm. Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world: look at a blossom—it drops presently, having done its service and lasted its time; but fruits succeed, and where would be the blossom's place could it continue? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favourite, whatever it may have first loved to look on, is dead and done with—as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to satisfy it, is superseded in due course. Keep but ever looking, whether with the body's eye or the mind's, and you will soon find something to look on! Has a man done wondering at women?—there follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men?—there 's God to wonder at: and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first

object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus . . .

1st Student. Put Schramm's pipe into his mouth again! There, you see! Well, this Jules . . . a wretched fribble —oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the other day! Canova's gallery—you know: there he marches first resolvedly past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye: all at once he stops full at the *Psiche-fanciulla*—cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement—"In your new place, beauty? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich —I see you!" Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pietà* for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into—I say, into—the group; by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova's practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint—and that, likewise, has he mastered at length! Good-bye, therefore, to poor Canova—whose gallery no longer needs detain his successor Jules, the predestinatec novel thinker in marble!

5th Student. Tell him about the women: go on to the women!

1st Student. Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said)

than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish? He was not to wallow in that mire, at least: he would wait, and love only at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psiche-fanciulla*. Now, I happened to hear of a young Greek—real Greek girl at Malamocco; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron's "hair like sea-moss"—Schramm knows!—white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest, —a daughter of Natalia, so she swears—that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three *lire* an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So first, Jules received a scented letter—somebody had seen his Tydeus at the Academy, and my picture was nothing to it: a profound admirer bade him persevere—would make herself known to him ere long. (Paolina, my little friend of the *Fenice*, transcribes divinely.) And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms—the pale cheeks, the black hair—whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocco model: we retained her name, too—Phene, which is, by interpretation, sea-eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a creature! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his monitress: and fancy us over these letters, two, three times a day, to receive and despatch! I concocted the main of it: relations were in the way—secrecy must be

observed—in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only speak to her when they were indissolubly united? St—st—Here they come!

6th Student. Both of them! Heaven's love, speak softly, speak within yourselves!

5th Student. Look at the bridegroom! Half his hair in storm and half in calm,—patted down over the left temple,—like a frothy cup one blows on to cool it: and the same old blouse that he murders the marble in.

2nd Student. Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy!—rich, that your face may the better set it off.

6th Student. And the bride! Yes, sure enough, our Phene! Should you have known her in her clothes? How magnificently pale!

Gottlieb. She does not also take it for earnest, I hope?

1st Student. Oh, Natalia's concern, that is! We settle with Natalia.

6th Student. She does not speak—has evidently let out no word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest of her lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are to break the secret to Jules?

Gottlieb. How he gazes on her! Pity—pity!

1st Student. They go in: now, silence! You three,—not nearer the window, mind, than that pomegranate: just where the little girl, who a few minutes ago passed us singing, is seated!

PART II.

NOON.

SCENE.—*Over Orcana. The house of* JULES, *who crosses its threshold with* PHENE: *she is silent, on which* JULES *begins—*

Do not die, Phene! I am yours now, you
Are mine now; let fate reach me how she likes,
If you 'll not die: so, never die! Sit here—
My work-room's single seat. I over-lean
This length of hair and lustrous front; they turn
Like an entire flower upward: eyes, lips, last
Your chin—no, last your throat turns: 't is their scent
Pulls down my face upon you. Nay, look ever
This one way till I change, grow you—I could
Change into you, beloved!
You by me,
And I by you; this is your hand in mine,
And side by side we sit: all 's true. Thank God!
I have spoken: speak you!
O my life to come!
My Tydeus must be carved that 's there in clay;

Yet how be carved, with you about the room?
Where must I place you? When I think that once
This room-full of rough block-work seemed my heaven
Without you! Shall I ever work again,
Get fairly into my old ways again,
Bid each conception stand while, trait by trait,
My hand transfers its lineaments to stone?
Will my mere fancies live near you, their truth—
The live truth, passing and repassing me,
Sitting beside me?
Now speak!
Only first,
See, all your letters! Was 't not well contrived?
Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe; she keeps
Your letters next her skin: which drops out foremost?
Ah,—this that swam down like a first moonbeam
Into my world!
Again those eyes complete
Their melancholy survey, sweet and slow,
Of all my room holds; to return and rest
On me, with pity, yet some wonder too:
As if God bade some spirit plague a world,
And this were the one moment of surprise
And sorrow while she took her station, pausing
O'er what she sees, finds good, and must destroy!
What gaze you at? Those? Books, I told you of:

Let your first word to me rejoice them, too:
This minion, a Coluthus, writ in red
Bistre and azure by Bessarion's scribe—
Read this line . . . no, shame—Homer's be the Greek
First breathed me from the lips of my Greek girl!
This Odyssey in coarse black vivid type
With faded yellow blossoms 'twixt page and page,
To mark great places with due gratitude;
" *He said, and on Antinous directed*
A bitter shaft" . . . a flower blots out the rest!
Again upon your search? My statues, then!
—Ah, do not mind that—better that will look
When cast in bronze—an Almaign Kaiser, that,
Swart-green and gold, with truncheon based on hip.
This, rather, turn to! What, unrecognized?
I thought you would have seen that here you sit
As I imagined you,—Hippolyta,
Naked upon her bright Numidian horse.
Recall you this then? "Carve in bold relief"—
So you commanded "carve, against I come,
"A Greek, in Athens, as our fashion was,
"Feasting, bay-filleted and thunder-free,
"Who rises 'neath the lifted myrtle-branch.
" 'Praise those who slew Hipparchus!' cry the guests,
" 'While o'er thy head the singer's myrtle waves
" 'As erst above our champion: stand up, all!'"

See, I have laboured to express your thought.
Quite round, a cluster of mere hands and arms,
(Thrust in all senses, all ways, from all sides,
Only consenting at the branch's end
They strain toward) serves for frame to a sole face,
The Praiser's, in the centre: who with eyes
Sightless, so bend they back to light inside
His brain where visionary forms throng up,
Sings, minding not that palpitating arch
Of hands and arms, nor the quick drip of wine
From the drenched leaves o'erhead, nor crowns cast off,
Violet and parsley crowns to trample on—
Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts approve,
Devoutly their unconquerable hymn.
But you must say a "well" to that—say "well!"
Because you gaze—am I fantastic, sweet?
Gaze like my very life's-stuff, marble—marbly
Even to the silence! Why, before I found
The real flesh Phene, I inured myself
To see, throughout all nature, varied stuff
For better nature's birth by means of art:
With me, each substance tended to one form
Of beauty—to the human archetype.
On every side occurred suggestive germs
Of that—the tree, the flower—or take the fruit,—
Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,

Curved beewise o'er its bough; as rosy limbs,
Depending, nestled in the leaves; and just
From a cleft rose-peach the whole Dryad sprang.
But of the stuffs one can be master of,
How I divined their capabilities!
From the soft-rinded smoothening facile chalk
That yields your outline to the air's embrace,
Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom;
Down to the crisp imperious steel, so sure
To cut its one confided thought clean out
Of all the world. But marble!—'neath my tools
More pliable than jelly—as it were
Some clear primordial creature dug from depths
In the earth's heart, where itself breeds itself,
And whence all baser substance may be worked;
Refine it off to air, you may,—condense it
Down to the diamond;—is not metal there,
When o'er the sudden speck my chisel trips?
—Not flesh, as flake off flake I scale, approach,
Lay bare those bluish veins of blood asleep?
Lurks flame in no strange windings where, surprised
By the swift implement sent home at once,
Flushes and glowings radiate and hover
About its track?
Phene? what—why is this?
That whitening cheek, those still dilating eyes!

Ah, you will die– I knew that you would die!

PHENE *begins, on his having long remained silent.*

Now the end 's coming; to be sure, it must
Have ended sometime! Tush, why need I speak
Their foolish speech? I cannot bring to mind
One half of it, beside; and do not care
For old Natalia now, nor any of them.
Oh, you—what are you?—if I do not try
To say the words Natalia made me learn,
To please your friends,—it is to keep myself
Where your voice lifted me, by letting that
Proceed: but can it? Even you, perhaps,
Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,
The music's life, and me along with that—
No, or you would! We 'll stay, then, as we are:
Above the world.
You creature with the eyes!
If I could look for ever up to them,
As now you let me,—I believe, all sin,
All memory of wrong done, suffering borne,
Would drop down, low and lower, to the earth
Whence all that 's low comes, and there touch and stay
—Never to overtake the rest of me,
All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,
Drawn by those eyes! What rises is myself,

Not me the shame and suffering; but they sink,
Are left, I rise above them. Keep me so,
Above the world!
But you sink, for your eyes
Are altering—altered! Stay—"I love you, love" . . .
I could prevent it if I understood:
More of your words to me: was 't in the tone
Or the words, your power?
Or stay—I will repeat
Their speech, if that contents you! Only change
No more, and I shall find it presently
Far back here, in the brain yourself filled up.
Natalia threatened me that harm should follow
Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,
But harm to me, I thought she meant, not you.
Your friends,—Natalia said they were your friends
And meant you well,—because, I doubted it,
Observing (what was very strange to see)
On every face, so different in all else,
The same smile girls like me are used to bear,
But never men, men cannot stoop so low;
Yet your friends, speaking of you, used that smile,
That hateful smirk of boundless self-conceit
Which seems to take possession of the world
And make of God a tame confederate,
Purveyor to their appetites . . . you know!

But still Natalia said they were your friends,
And they assented though they smiled the more,
And all came round me,—that thin Englishman
With light lank hair seemed leader of the rest;
He held a paper—"What we want," said he,
Ending some explanation to his friends—
"Is something slow, involved and mystical,
"To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his taste
"And lure him on until, at innermost
"Where he seeks sweetness' soul, he may find—this!
"—As in the apple's core, the noisome fly:
"For insects on the rind are seen at once,
"And brushed aside as soon, but this is found
"Only when on the lips or loathing tongue."
And so he read what I have got by heart:
I 'll speak it,—"Do not die, love! I am yours."
No—is not that, or like that, part of words
Yourself began by speaking? Strange to lose
What cost such pains to learn! Is this more right?

I am a painter who cannot paint;
In my life, a devil rather than saint;
In my brain, as poor a creature too:
No end to all I cannot do!
Yet do one thing at least I can—
Love a man or hate a man
Supremely: thus my lore began.
Through the Valley of Love I went,

In the lovingest spot to abide,
And just on the verge where I pitched my tent,
I found Hate dwelling beside.
(Let the Bridegroom ask what the painter meant,
Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride!)
And further, I traversed Hate's grove,
In the hatefullest nook to dwell;
But lo, where I flung myself prone, couched Love
Where the shadow threefold fell.
(The meaning—those black bride's-eyes above,
Not a painter's lip should tell!)

"And here," said he, "Jules probably will ask,
"'You have black eyes, Love,—you are, sure enough,
"'My peerless bride,—then do you tell indeed
"'What needs some explanation! What means this?'"
—And I am to go on, without a word—

So, I grew wise in Love and Hate,
From simple that I was of late.
Once, when I loved, I would enlace
Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form and face
Of her I loved, in one embrace—
As if by mere love I could love immensely!
Once, when I hated, I would plunge
My sword, and wipe with the first lunge
My foe's whole life out like a sponge—
As if by mere hate I could hate intensely!
But now I am wiser, know better the fashion
How passion seeks aid from its opposite passion:

And if I see cause to love more, hate more
Than ever man loved, ever hated before—
And seek in the Valley of Love,
The nest, or the nook in Hate's Grove,
Where my soul may surely reach
The essence, nought less, of each,
The Hate of all Hates, the Love
Of all Loves, in the Valley or Grove,—
I find them the very warders
Each of the other's borders.
When I love most, Love is disguised
In Hate; and when Hate is surprised
In Love, then I hate most: ask
How Love smiles through Hate's iron casque,
Hate grins through Love's rose-braided mask,—
And how, having hated thee,
I sought long and painfully
To reach thy heart, nor prick
The skin but pierce to the quick—
Ask this, my Jules, and be answered straight
By thy bride—how the painter Lutwyche can hate!

JULES *interposes.*

Lutwyche! Who else? But all of them, no doubt,
Hated me: they at Venice—presently
Their turn, however! You I shall not meet:
If I dreamed, saying this would wake me.
Keep
What 's here, the gold—we cannot meet again,

Consider! and the money was but meant
For two years' travel, which is over now,
All chance or hope or care or need of it.
This—and what comes from selling these, my casts
And books and medals, except . . . let them go
Together, so the produce keeps you safe
Out of Natalia's clutches! If by chance
(For all 's chance here) I should survive the gang
At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,
We might meet somewhere, since the world is wide.

[*From without is heard the voice of* PIPPA, *singing—*

Give her but a least excuse to love me!
When—where—
How—can this arm establish her above me,
If fortune fixed her as my lady there,
There already, to eternally reprove me?
(*"Hist!"—said Kate the Queen;*
But "Oh!"—cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
"'T is only a page that carols unseen,
"Crumbling your hounds their messes!")

Is she wronged?—To the rescue of her honour,
My heart!
Is she poor?—What costs it to be styled a donor?
Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.
But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!
(*"Nay, list!"—bade Kate the Queen;*
And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,

"'*T is only a page that carols unseen,*
"*Fitting your hawks their jesses!*")

[PIPPA *passes.*

JULES *resumes.*

What name was that the little girl sang forth?
Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who renounced
The crown of Cyprus to be lady here
At Asolo, where still her memory stays,
And peasants sing how once a certain page
Pined for the grace of her so far above
His power of doing good to, "Kate the Queen—
"She never could be wronged, be poor," he sighed,
"Need him to help her!"
Yes, a bitter thing
To see our lady above all need of us;
Yet so we look ere we will love; not I,
But the world looks so. If whoever loves
Must be, in some sort, god or worshipper,
The blessing or the blest one, queen or page,
Why should we always choose the page's part?
Here is a woman with utter need of me,—
I find myself queen here, it seems!
How strange!
Look at the woman here with the new soul,
Like my own Psyche,—fresh upon her lips
Alit, the visionary butterfly.

Waiting my word to enter and make bright,
Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.
This body had no soul before, but slept
Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly, free
From taint or foul with stain, as outward things
Fastened their image on its passiveness:
Now, it will wake, feel, live—or die again!
Shall to produce form out of unshaped stuff
Be Art—and further, to evoke a soul
From form be nothing? This new soul is mine!

Now, to kill Lutwyche, what would that do?—save
A wretched dauber, men will hoot to death
Without me, from their hooting. Oh, to hear
God's voice plain as I heard it first, before
They broke in with their laughter! I heard them
Henceforth, not God.
To Ancona—Greece—some isle!
I wanted silence only; there is clay
Everywhere. One may do whate'er one likes
In Art: the only thing is, to make sure
That one does like it—which takes pains to know.
Scatter all this, my Phene—this mad dream!
Who, what is Lutwyche, what Natalia's friends,
What the whole world except our love—my own,
Own Phene? But I told you, did I not,

Ere night we travel for your land—some isle
With the sea's silence on it? Stand aside—
I do but break these paltry models up
To begin Art afresh. Meet Lutwyche, I—
And save him from my statue meeting him?
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!
Like a god going through his world, there stands
One mountain for a moment in the dusk,
Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its brow:
And you are ever by me while I gaze
—Are in my arms as now—as now -as now!
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!
Some unsuspected isle in far-off seas!

Talk by the way, while PIPPA *is passing from Orcana to the Turret. Two or three of the Austrian Police loitering with* BLUPHOCKS, *an English vagabond, just in view of the Turret.*

*Bluphocks.** So, that is your Pippa, the little girl who passed us singing? Well, your Bishop's Intendant's money shall be honestly earned:—now, don't make me that sour face because I bring the Bishop's name into the business; we know he can have nothing to do with

* "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

such horrors: we know that he is a saint and all tnat a bishop should be, who is a great man beside. *Oh were but every worm a maggot, Every fly a grig, Every bough a Christmas faggot, Every tune a jig!* In fact, I have abjured all religions; but the last I inclined to, was the Armenian: for I have travelled, do you see, and at Koenigsberg, Prussia Improper (so styled because there 's a sort of bleak hungry sun there), you might remark over a venerable house-porch, a certain Chaldee inscription; and brief as it is, a mere glance at it used absolutely to change the mood of every bearded passenger. In they turned, one and all; the young and lightsome, with no irreverent pause, the aged and decrepit, with a sensible alacrity: 't was the Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck with curiosity, I lost no time in learning Syriac —(these are vowels, you dogs,—follow my stick's end in the mud—*Celarent, Darii, Ferio!*) and one morning presented myself, spelling-book in hand, a, b, c,—I picked it out letter by letter, and what was the purport of this miraculous posy? Some cherished legend of the past, you 'll say—"*How Moses hocus-pocussed Egypt's land with fly and locust*,"—or, "*How to Jonah sounded harshish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish*,"—or, "*How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam*," In no wise! "*Shackabrack—Boach—somebody or other —Isaach, Re-cei-ver, Pur-cha-ser and Ex-chan-ger of—*

Stolen Goods!" So, talk to me of the religion of a bishop! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge—mean to live so—and die—*As some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Hellward bound in Charon's wherry, With food for both worlds, under and upper, Lupine-seed and Hecate's supper, And never an obolus . . .* (Though thanks to you, or this Intendant through you, or this Bishop through his Intendant – I possess a burning pocketful of *zwanzigers*) . . . *To pay the Stygian Ferry!*

1*st Policeman.* There is the girl, then; go and deserve them the moment you have pointed out to us Signor Luigi and his mother. [*To the rest.*] I have been noticing a house yonder, this long while: not a shutter unclosed since morning!

2*nd Policeman.* Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the silk-mills here: he dozes by the hour, wakes up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be Prince Metternich, and then dozes again, after having bidden young Sebald, the foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts. Never molest such a household, they mean well.

Bluphocks. Only, cannot you tell me something of this little Pippa, I must have to do with? One could make something of that name. Pippa—that is, short for Felippa – rhyming to *Panurge consults Hertrippa—Believest thou, King Agrippa?* Something might be done with that name.

2nd Policeman. Put into rhyme that your head and a ripe musk-melon would not be dear at half a *zwanziger!* Leave this fooling, and look out; the afternoon 's over or nearly so.

3rd Policeman. Where in this passport of Signor Luigi does our Principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly? There? What 's there beside a simple signature? (That English fool 's busy watching.)

2nd Policeman. Flourish all round—"Put all possible obstacles in his way;" oblong dot at the end—"Detain him till further advices reach you;" scratch at bottom—"Send him back on pretence of some informality in the above;" ink-spirt on right-hand side (which is the case here)—"Arrest him at once." Why and wherefore, I don't concern myself, but my instructions amount to this: if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna —well and good, the passport deposed with us for our *visa* is really for his own use, they have misinformed the Office, and he means well; but let him stay over to-night—there has been the pretence we suspect, the accounts of his corresponding and holding intelligence with the Carbonari are correct, we arrest him at once, to-morrow comes Venice, and presently Spielberg. Bluphocks makes the signal, sure enough! That is he, entering the turret with his mother, no doubt.

PART III.

EVENING.

SCENE.—*Inside the Turret on the Hill above Asolo.*
LUIGI *and his* Mother *entering.*

Mother. If there blew wind, you 'd hear a long sigh, easing
The utmost heaviness of music's heart.
Luigi. Here in the archway?
Mother. Oh no, no—in farther,
Where the echo is made, on the ridge.
Luigi. Here surely, then.
How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped up!
Hark—"Lucius Junius!" The very ghost of a voice
Whose body is caught and kept by . . . what are those?
Mere withered wallflowers, waving overhead?
They seem an elvish group with thin bleached hair
That lean out of their topmost fortress—look
And listen, mountain men, to what we say,
Hand under chin of each grave earthy face.
Up and show faces all of you!—"All of you!"

That 's the king dwarf with the scarlet comb; old Franz,
Come down and meet your fate? Hark—"Meet your
fate!"

Mother. Let him not meet it, my Luigi—do not
Go to his City! Putting crime aside,
Half of these ills of Italy are feigned:
Your Pellicos and writers for effect,
Write for effect.

Luigi. Hush! Say A. writes, and B.

Mother. These A.s and B.s write for effect, I say.
Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good
Is silent; you hear each petty injury,
None of his virtues; he is old beside,
Quiet and kind, and densely stupid. Why
Do A. and B. not kill him themselves?

Luigi. They teach
Others to kill him—me—and, if I fail,
Others to succeed; now, if A. tried and failed,
I could not teach that: mine 's the lesser task.
Mother, they visit night by night . . .

Mother. —You, Luigi?
Ah, will you let me tell you what you are?

Luigi. Why not? Oh, the one thing you fear to hint,
You may assure yourself I say and say
Ever to myself! At times—nay, even as now
We sit—I think my mind is touched, suspect

All is not sound: but is not knowing that,
What constitutes one sane or otherwise?
I know I am thus—so, all is right again.
I laugh at myself as through the town I walk.
And see men merry as if no Italy
Were suffering; then I ponder—"I am rich,
"Young, healthy; why should this fact trouble me,
"More than it troubles these?" But it does trouble
No, trouble 's a bad word: for as I walk
There 's springing and melody and giddiness,
And old quaint turns and passages of my youth,
Dreams long forgotten, little in themselves,
Return to me—whatever may amuse me:
And earth seems in a truce with me, and heaven
Accords with me, all things suspend their strife,
The very cicala laughs "There goes he, and there!
"Feast him, the time is short; he is on his way
"For the world's sake: feast him this once, our friend!"
And in return for all this, I can trip
Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps. I go
This evening, mother!

Mother. But mistrust yourself—
Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on him!

Luigi. Oh, there I feel—am sure that I am right!

Mother. Mistrust your judgment then, of the mere means

To this wild enterprise. Say, you are right,—
How should one in your state e'er bring to pass
What would require a cool head, a cold heart,
And a calm hand? You never will escape.

Luigi. Escape? To even wish that, would spoil all.
The dying is best part of it. Too much
Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of mine,
To leave myself excuse for longer life:
Was not life pressed down, running o'er with joy,
That I might finish with it ere my fellows
Who, sparelier feasted, make a longer stay?
I was put at the board-head, helped to all
At first; I rise up happy and content.
God must be glad one loves his world so much.
I can give news of earth to all the dead
Who ask me: —last year's sunsets, and great stars
Which had a right to come first and see ebb
The crimson wave that drifts the sun away—
Those crescent moons with notched and burning rims
That strengthened into sharp fire, and there stood,
Impatient of the azure—and that day
In March, a double rainbow stopped the storm—
May 's warm slow yellow moonlit summer nights—
Gone are they, but I have them in my soul!

Mother. (He will not go!)

Luigi. You smile at me? 'T is true,—

Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,
Environ my devotedness as quaintly
As round about some antique altar wreathe
The rose festoons, goats' horns, and oxen's skulls.
Mother. See now: you reach the city, you must cross
His threshold—how?
Luigi. Oh, that 's if we conspired!
Then would come pains in plenty, as you guess—
But guess not how the qualities most fit
For such an office, qualities I have,
Would little stead me, otherwise employed,
Yet prove of rarest merit only here.
Every one knows for what his excellence
Will serve, but no one ever will consider
For what his worst defect might serve: and yet
Have you not seen me range our coppice yonder
In search of a distorted ash?—I find
The wry spoilt branch a natural perfect bow.
Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precautioned man
Arriving at the palace on my errand!
No, no! I have a handsome dress packed up—
White satin here, to set off my black hair;
In I shall march—for you may watch your life out
Behind thick walls, make friends there to betray you;
More than one man spoils everything. March straight—
Only, no clumsy knife to fumble for.

Take the great gate, and walk (not saunter) on
Thro' guards and guards——I have rehearsed it all
Inside the turret here a hundred times.
Don't ask the way of whom you meet, observe!
But where they cluster thickliest is the door
Of doors; they 'll let you pass—they 'll never blab
Each to the other, he knows not the favourite,
Whence he is bound and what 's his business now.
Walk in—straight up to him; you have no knife:
Be prompt, how should he scream? Then, out with you!
Italy, Italy, my Italy!
You 're free, you 're free! Oh mother, I could dream
They got about me—Andrea from his exile,
Pier from his dungeon, Gualtier from his grave!

Mother. Well, you shall go. Yet seems this patriotism
The easiest virtue for a selfish man
To acquire: he loves himself—and next, the world—
If he must love beyond,—but nought between:
As a short-sighted man sees nought midway
His body and the sun above. But you
Are my adored Luigi, ever obedient
To my least wish, and running o'er with love:
I could not call you cruel or unkind.
Once more, your ground for killing him!—then go!

Luigi. Now do you try me, or make sport of me?
How first the Austrians got these provinces . . .

(If that is all, I 'll satisfy you soon)
—Never by conquest but by cunning, for
That treaty whereby . . .
Mother. Well?
Luigi. (Sure, he 's arrived,
The tell-tale cuckoo : spring 's his confidant,
And he lets out her April purposes!)
Or . . . better go at once to modern time,
He has . . . they have . . . in fact, I understand
But can't restate the matter; that 's my boast:
Others could reason it out to you, and prove
Things they have made me feel.
Mother. Why go to-night?
Morn 's for adventure. Jupiter is now
A morning-star. I cannot hear you, Luigi!
Luigi. "I am the bright and morning-star," saith God—
And, "to such an one I give the morning-star.
The gift of the morning-star! Have I God's gift
Of the morning-star?
Mother. Chiara will love to see
That Jupiter an evening-star next June.
Luigi. True, mother. Well for those who live through June!
Great noontides, thunder-storms, all glaring pomps
That triumph at the heels of June the god

Leading his revel through our leafy world.
Yes, Chiara will be here.

Mother. In June: remember,
Yourself appointed that month for her coming.

Luigi. Was that low noise the echo?

Mother. The night-wind.
She must be grown—with her blue eyes upturned
As if life were one long and sweet surprise:
In June she comes.

Luigi. We were to see together
The Titian at Treviso. There, again!

[*From without is heard the voice of* PIPPA, *singing*—

A king lived long ago,
In the morning of the world,
When earth was nigher heaven than now:
And the king's locks curled,
Disparting o'er a forehead full
As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and horn
Of some sacrificial bull—
Only calm as a babe new-born:
For he was got to a sleepy mood,
So safe from all decrepitude,
Age with its bane, so sure gone by,
(*The gods so loved him while he dreamed*)
That, having lived thus long, there seemed
No need the king should ever die.

Luigi. No need that sort of king should ever die!

Among the rocks his city was:
Before his palace, in the sun,
He sat to see his people pass,
And judge them every one
From its threshold of smooth stone.
They haled him many a valley-thief
Caught in the sheep-pens, robber-chief
Swarthy and shameless, beggar-cheat,
Spy-prowler, or rough pirate found
On the sea-sand left aground;
And sometimes clung about his feet,
With bleeding lip and burning cheek,
A woman, bitterest wrong to speak
Of one with sullen thickset brows:
And sometimes from the prison-house
The angry priests a pale wretch brought,
Who through some chink had pushed and pressed
On knees and elbows, belly and breast,
Worm-like into the temple,—caught
He was by the very god,
Who ever in the darkness strode
Backward and forward, keeping watch
O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch!
These, all and every one,
The king judged, sitting in the sun.

Luigi. That king should still judge sitting in the sun!

His councillors, on left and right,
Looked anxious up,—but no surprise
Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes

Where the very blue had turned to white.
'T is said, a Python scared one day
The breathless city, till he came,
With forky tongue and eyes on flame
Where the old king sat to judge alway,
But when he saw the sweepy hair
Girt with a crown of berries rare
Which the god will hardly give to wear
To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare
In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,
At his wondrous forest rites,—
Seeing this, he did not dare
Approach that threshold in the sun,
Assault the old king smiling there.
Such grace had kings when the world begun!

[PIPPA *passes.*

Luigi. And such grace have they, now that the world ends!
The Python at the city, on the throne,
And brave men, God would crown for slaying him,
Lurk in bye-corners lest they fall his prey.
Are crowns yet to be won in this late time,
Which weakness makes me hesitate to reach?
'T is God's voice calls: how could I stay? Farewell!

Talk by the way, while PIPPA *is passing from the Turret to the Bishop's Brother's House, close to the Duomo S. Maria. Poor* Girls *sitting on the steps.*

1st Girl. There goes a swallow to Venice—the stout
seafarer!
Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish for wings.
Let us all wish; you wish first!
2nd Girl. I? This sunset
To finish.
3rd Girl. That old—somebody I know,
Greyer and older than my grandfather,
To give me the same treat he gave last week—
Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,
Lampreys and red Breganze-wine, and mumbling
The while some folly about how well I fare,
Let sit and eat my supper quietly:
Since had he not himself been late this morning
Detained at—never mind where,—had he not . . .
"Eh, baggage, had I not!"—
2nd Girl. How she can lie!
3rd Girl. Look there—by the nails!
2nd Girl. What makes your fingers red?
3rd Girl. Dipping them into wine to write bad words
with
On the bright table: how he laughed!

1st Girl. My turn.
Spring 's come and summer 's coming. I would wear
A long loose gown, down to the feet and hands,
With plaits here, close about the throat, all day;
And all night lie, the cool long nights, in bed;
And have new milk to drink, apples to eat,
Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats . . ah, I should say,
This is away in the fields—miles!

3rd Girl. Say at once
You 'd be at home: she 'd always be at home!
Now comes the story of the farm among
The cherry orchards, and how April snowed
White blossoms on her as she ran. Why, fool,
They 've rubbed the chalk-mark out, how tall you were
Twisted your starling's neck, broken his cage,
Made a dung-hill of your garden!

1st Girl. They, destroy
My garden since I left them? well—perhaps!
I would have done so: so I hope they have!
A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall;
They called it mine, I have forgotten why,
It must have been there long ere I was born:
Cric—cric—I think I hear the wasps o'erhead
Pricking the papers strung to flutter there
And keep off birds in fruit-time—coarse long papers,
And the wasps eat them, prick them through and through

3rd Girl. How her mouth twitches! Where was I?—
before
She broke in with her wishes and long gowns
And wasps—would I be such a fool!—Oh, here!
This is my way: I answer every one
Who asks me why I make so much of him—
(If you say, "you love him"—straight "he 'll not be
gulled!")
"He that seduced me when I was a girl
"Thus high—had eyes like yours, or hair like yours,
"Brown, red, white,"—as the case may be: that pleases!
See how that beetle burnishes in the path!
There sparkles he along the dust: and, there
Your journey to that maize-tuft spoiled at least!
1st Girl. When I was young, they said if you killed one
Of those sunshiny beetles, that his friend
Up there, would shine no more that day nor next.
2nd Girl. When you were young? Nor are you young,
that 's true.
How your plump arms, that were, have dropped away!
Why, I can span them. Cecco beats you still?
No matter, so you keep your curious hair.
I wish they 'd find a way to dye our hair
Your colour—any lighter tint, indeed,
Than black: the men say they are sick of black,
Black eyes, black hair!

4th Girl. Sick of yours, like enough.
Do you pretend you ever tasted lampreys
And ortolans? Giovita, of the palace,
Engaged (but there 's no trusting him) to slice me
Polenta with a knife that had cut up
An ortolan.

2nd Girl. Why, there! Is not that Pippa
We are to talk to, under the window,—quick,—
Where the lights are?

1st Girl. That she? No, or she would sing
For the Intendant said . . .

3rd Girl. Oh, you sing first!
Then, if she listens and comes close . . I 'll tell you,—
Sing that song the young English noble made,
Who took you for the purest of the pure,
And meant to leave the world for you—what fun!

2nd Girl [*sings*].

You 'll love me yet!—and I can tarry
Your love's protracted growing:
June reared that bunch of flowers you carry,
From seeds of April's sowing.

I plant a heartful now: some seed
At least is sure to strike,
And yield—what you 'll not pluck indeed,
Not love, but, may be, like.

You 'll look at least on love's remains,
A grave's one violet:
Your look?—that pays a thousand pains.
What 's death? You 'll love me yet!

3rd Girl [*to* PIPPA *who approaches*]. Oh, you may come closer—we shall not eat you! Why, you seem the very person that the great rich handsome Englishman has fallen so violently in love with. I 'll tell you all about it.

PART IV.

NIGHT.

SCENE—*Inside the Palace by the Duomo.* MONSIGNOR, *dismissing his* Attendants.

Monsignor. Thanks, friends, many thanks! I chiefly desire life now, that I may recompense every one of you. Most I know something of already. What, a repast prepared? *Benedicto benedicatur* . . . ugh, ugh! Where was I? Oh, as you were remarking, Ugo, the weather is mild, very unlike winter-weather: but I am a Sicilian, you know, and shiver in your Julys here. To be sure, when 't was full summer at Messina, as we priests used to cross in procession the great square on Assumption Day, you might see our thickest yellow tapers twist suddenly in two, each like a falling star, or sink down on themselves in a gore of wax. But go, my friends, but go! [*To the* Intendant.] Not you, Ugo! [*The others leave the apartment.*] I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo.

Intendant. Uguccio—

Monsignor. . . 'guccio Stefani, man! of Ascoli, Fermo and Fossombruno;—what I do need instructing about, are these accounts of your administration of my poor brother's affairs. Ugh! I shall never get through a third part of your accounts: take some of these dainties before we attempt it, however. Are you bashful to that degree? For me, a crust and water suffice.

Intendant. Do you choose this especial night to question me?

Monsignor. This night, Ugo. You have managed my late brother's affairs since the death of our elder brother: fourteen years and a month, all but three days. On the Third of December, I find him . . .

Intendant. If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back: they will hardly bear looking into, so far back.

Monsignor. Ay, ay, ugh, ugh,—nothing but disappointments here below! I remark a considerable payment made to yourself on this Third of December. Talk of disappointments! There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor I did my utmost to advance, that the Church might be a gainer by us both: he was going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of Art. Here 's his letter,—"He never had a clearly

conceived Ideal within his brain till to-day. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's Ideals; and, in the very perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure: his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit. There is but one method of escape: confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics,"—strike out, I dare say, a school like Correggio: how think you, Ugo?

Intendant. Is Correggio a painter?

Monsignor. Foolish Jules! and yet, after all, why foolish? He may—probably will—fail egregiously; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way, by a poet now, or a musician (spirits who have conceived and perfected an Ideal through some other channel), transferring it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them; eh, Ugo? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo!

Intendant. Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours. First, you select the group of which I formed one,—next you thin it gradually,—always retaining me with your smile,—and so do you proceed till you have

fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls. And now then? Let this farce, this chatter end now: what is it you want with me?

Monsignor. Ugo!

Intendant. From the instant you arrived, I felt your smile on me as you questioned me about this and the other article in those papers—why your brother should have given me this villa, that *podere*,—and your nod at the end meant,—what?

Monsignor. Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here. If once you set me coughing, Ugo!—

Intendant. I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess: now ask me what for! what service I did him—ask me!

Monsignor. I would better not: I should rip up old disgraces, let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo of Forli (which, I forgot to observe, is your true name), was the interdict ever taken off you, for robbing that church at Cesena?

Intendant. No, nor needs be: for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him . . .

Monsignor. Ah, he employed you in that business, did he? Well, I must let you keep, as you say, this villa and that *podere*, for fear the world should find out my relations were of so indifferent a stamp? Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and century after century

have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under heaven: my own father . . . rest his soul!—I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest: my dear two dead brothers were,—what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled them in vice, if not in wealth: but from my boyhood I came out from among them, and so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from another source; or if from this, by contrast only,—for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however; so far as my brothers' ill-gotten treasure reverts to me, I can stop the consequences of his crime: and not one *soldo* shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with; what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villanous seize. Because, to pleasure myself apart from other considerations, my food would be millet-cake, my dress sackcloth, and my couch straw,—am I therefore to let you, the offscouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *poderi* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No—if my cough would but allow me to speak!

Intendant. What am I to expect? You are going to punish me?

Monsignor. —Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in. How should I dare to say . . .

Intendant. "Forgive us our trespasses"?

Monsignor. My friend, it is because I avow myself a very worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud perhaps. Shall I proceed, as it were, a-pardoning?—I?—who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuousest efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less keep others out. No: I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

Intendant. And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

Monsignor. 1, 2—N° 3!—ay, can you read the substance of a letter, N° 3, I have received from Rome? It is precisely on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late younger brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment,

but the taking all pains, as guardian of the infant's heritage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, whensoever, and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why, man, do I not know the old story? The heir between the succeeding heir, and this heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come now!

Intendant. So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face; or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's power so thoroughly: the child is always ready to produce—as you say—howsoever, wheresoever, and whensoever.

Monsignor. Liar!

Intendant. Strike me? Ah, so might a father chastise! I shall sleep soundly to-night at least, though the gallows await me to-morrow; for what a life did I lead! Carlo of Cesena reminds me of his connivance, every time I pay his annuity; which happens commonly thrice a year. If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bishop—you!

Monsignor. I see through the trick, caitiff! I would you spoke truth for once. All shall be sifted, however—seven times sifted.

Intendant. And how my absurd riches encumbered me! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once unbosom myself, glorify Heaven, and die!

Sir, you are no brutal dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death: let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you—the girl—here close at hand; not the stupid obvious kind of killing; do not speak—know nothing of her nor of me! I see her every day—saw her this morning: of course there is to be no killing; but at Rome the courtesans perish off every three years, and I can entice her thither—have indeed begun operations already. There 's a certain lusty blue-eyed florid-complexioned English knave, I and the Police employ occasionally. You assent, I perceive—no, that 's not it—assent I do not say—but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and give me time to cross the Alps? 'T is but a little black-eyed pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of harm's way up to this present; for I always intended to make your life a plague to you with her. 'T is as well settled once and for ever. Some women I have procured will pass Bluphocks, my

handsome scoundrel, off for somebody; and once Pippa entangled!—you conceive? Through her singing? Is it a bargain?

[*From without is heard the voice of* PIPPA, *singing*—

Overhead the tree-tops meet,
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet;
There was nought above me, nought below,
My childhood had not learned to know:
For, what are the voices of birds
—Ay, and of beasts,—but words, our words,
Only so much more sweet?
The knowledge of that with my life begun.
But I had so near made out the sun,
And counted your stars, the seven and one,
Like the fingers of my hand:
Nay, I could all but understand
Wherefore through heaven the white moon ranges;
And just when out of her soft fifty changes
No unfamiliar face might overlook me—
Suddenly God took me.

[PIPPA *passes.*

Monsignor [*springing up*]. My people—one and all—all—within there! Gag this villain—tie him hand and foot! He dares . . . I know not half he dares—but remove him—quick! *Miserere mei, Domine!* Quick, I say!

SCENE.—PIPPA'S *chamber again. She enters it.*

The bee with his comb,
The mouse at her dray,
The grub in his tomb,
Wile winter away;
But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-worm, I pray,
How fare they?
Ha, ha, thanks for your counsel, my Zanze!
"Feast upon lampreys, quaff Breganze"—
The summer of life so easy to spend,
And care for to-morrow so soon put away!
But winter hastens at summer's end,
And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,
How fare they?
No bidding me then to . . . what did Zanze say?
"Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small feet shoes
"More like" . . (what said she?)—"and less like canoes!"
How pert that girl was!—would I be those pert
Impudent staring women! It had done me,
However, surely no such mighty hurt
To learn his name who passed that jest upon me:
No foreigner, that I can recollect,
Came, as she says, a month since, to inspect
Our silk-mills—none with blue eyes and thick rings
Of raw-silk-coloured hair, at all events.

Well, if old Luca keep his good intents,
We shall do better, see what next year brings.
I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear
More destitute than you perhaps next year!
Bluph . . . something! I had caught the uncouth
name
But for Monsignor's people's sudden clatter
Above us bound to spoil such idle chatter
As ours: it were indeed a serious matter
If silly talk like ours should put to shame
The pious man, the man devoid of blame,
The . . . ah but—ah but, all the same,
No mere mortal has a right
To carry that exalted air;
Best people are not angels quite:
While—not the worst of people's doings scare
The devil; so there 's that proud look to spare!
Which is mere counsel to myself, mind! for
I have just been the holy Monsignor:
And I was you too, Luigi's gentle mother,
And you too, Luigi!—how that Luigi started
Out of the turret—doubtlessly departed
On some good errand or another,
For he passed just now in a traveller's trim,
And the sullen company that prowled
About his path, I noticed, scowled

As if they had lost a prey in him.
And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,
And I was Ottima beside,
And now what am I?—tired of fooling.
Day for folly, night for schooling!
New year's day is over and spent,
Ill or well, I must be content.
Even my lily 's asleep, I vow:
Wake up—here 's a friend I 've plucked you:
Call this flower a heart's-ease now!
Something rare, let me instruct you,
Is this, with petals triply swollen,
Three times spotted, thrice the pollen;
While the leaves and parts that witness
Old proportions and their fitness,
Here remain unchanged, unmoved now;
Call this pampered thing improved now!
Suppose there 's a king of the flowers
And a girl-show held in his bowers—
"Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,"
Says he, "Zanze from the Brenta,
"I have made her gorge polenta
"Till both cheeks are near as bouncing
"As her . . . name there 's no pronouncing!
"See this heightened colour too,
"For she swilled Breganze wine

"Till her nose turned deep carmine;
"'T was but white when wild she grew.
"And only by this Zanze's eyes
"Of which we could not change the size,
"The magnitude of all achieved
"Otherwise, may be perceived."

Oh what a drear dark close to my poor day!
How could that red sun drop in that black cloud?
Ah Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,
Dispensed with, never more to be allowed!
Day's turn is over, now arrives the night's.
Oh lark, be day's apostle
To mavis, merle and throstle,
Bid them their betters jostle
From day and its delights!
But at night, brother howlet, over the woods,
Toll the world to thy chantry;
Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods
Full complines with gallantry:
Then, owls and bats,
Cowls and twats,
Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,
Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry!

[*After she has begun to undress herself.*

Now, one thing I should like to really know:

How near I ever might approach all these
I only fancied being, this long day:
—Approach, I mean, so as to touch them, so
As to . . . in some way . . . move them—if you
please,
Do good or evil to them some slight way.
For instance, if I wind
Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind
[*Sitting on the bedside.*
And border Ottima's cloak's hem.
Ah me, and my important part with them,
This morning's hymn half promised when I rose!
True in some sense or other, I suppose.
[*As she lies down.*
God bless me! I can pray no more to-night.
No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right.

All service ranks the same with God—
With God, whose puppets, best and worst,
Are we: there is no last nor first.

[*She sleeps.*

KING VICTOR & KING CHARLES;

A TRAGEDY.

NOTE.

So far as I know, this Tragedy is the first artistic consequence of what Voltaire termed "a terrible event without consequences;" and although it professes to be historical, I have taken more pains to arrive at the history than most readers would thank me for particularizing: since acquainted, as I will hope them to be, with the chief circumstances of Victor's remarkable European career—nor quite ignorant of the sad and surprising facts I am about to reproduce (a tolerable account of which is to be found, for instance, in Abbé Roman's *Récit*, or even the fifth of Lord Orrery's Letters from Italy)—I cannot expect them to be versed, nor desirous of becoming so, in all the detail of the memoirs, correspondence, and relations of the time. From these only may be obtained a knowledge of the fiery and audacious temper, unscrupulous selfishness, profound dissimulation, and singular fertility in resources, of Victor—the extreme and painful sensibility, prolonged immaturity of powers, earnest good purpose and vacillating will of Charles—the noble and right woman's manliness of his wife—and the ill-considered rascality and subsequent better-advised rectitude of D'Ormea. When I say, therefore, that I cannot but believe my statement (combining as it does what appears correct in Voltaire and plausible in Condorcet) more true to person and thing than any it has hitherto been my fortune to meet with, no doubt my word will be taken, and my evidence spared as readily.

R. B.

LONDON: 1842.

PERSONS.

VICTOR AMADEUS, *first King of Sardinia.*
CHARLES EMMANUEL, *his son, Prince of Piedmont.*
POLYXENA, *wife of Charles.*
D'ORMEA, *minister.*

SCENE.—*The Council Chamber of Rivoli Palace, near Turin, communicating with a Hall at the back, an Apartment to the left, and another to the right of the stage.*

TIME, 1730–1731.

KING VICTOR & KING CHARLES.

1842.

FIRST YEAR, 1730.—KING VICTOR.

PART I.

CHARLES, POLYXENA.

Charles. You think so? Well, I do not.
Polyxena. My beloved,
All must clear up; we shall be happy yet:
This cannot last for ever—oh, may change
To-day or any day!
Charles. —May change? Ah yes—
May change!
Polyxena. Endure it, then.
Charles. No doubt, a life
Like this drags on, now better and now worse.
My father may . . . may take to loving me;
And he may take D'Ormea closer yet
To counsel him;— may even cast off her

—That bad Sebastian; but he also may
. . . Or no, Polyxena, my only friend,
He may not force you from me?
Polyxena. Now, force me
From you!—me, close by you as if there gloomed
No Sebastians, no D'Ormeas on our path—
At Rivoli or Turin, still at hand,
Arch-counsellor, prime confidant . . . force me!
Charles. Because I felt as sure, as I feel sure
We clasp hands now, of being happy once.
Young was I, quite neglected, nor concerned
By the world's business that engrossed so much
My father and my brother: if I peered
From out my privacy,—amid the crash
And blaze of nations, domineered those two.
'T was war, peace—France our foe, now—England, friend—
In love with Spain—at feud with Austria! Well—
I wondered, laughed a moment's laugh for pride
In the chivalrous couple, then let drop
My curtain—"I am out of it," I said—
When . . .
Polyxena. You have told me, Charles.
Charles. . . . Polyxena—
When suddenly,—a warm March day, just that!
Just so much sunshine as the cottage child

Basks in delighted, while the cottager
Takes off his bonnet, as he ceases work,
To catch the more of it—and it must fall
Heavily on my brother! Had you seen
Philip—the lion-featured! not like me!

Polyxena. I know—

Charles. And Philip's mouth yet fast to mine,
His dead cheek on my cheek, his arm still round
My neck,—they bade me rise, "for I was heir
To the Duke," they said, "the right hand of the Duke:"
Till then he was my father, not the Duke.
So . . . let me finish . . . the whole intricate
World's-business their dead boy was born to, I
Must conquer,—ay, the brilliant thing he was,
I, of a sudden must be: my faults, my follies,
—All bitter truths were told me, all at once,
To end the sooner. What I simply styled
Their overlooking me, had been contempt:
How should the Duke employ himself, forsooth,
With such an one, while lordly Philip rode
By him their Turin through? But he was punished,
And must put up with - me! 'T was sad enough
To learn my future portion and submit.
And then the wear and worry, blame on blame!
For, spring-sounds in my ears, spring-smells about,
How could I but grow dizzy in their pent

Dim palace-rooms at first? My mother's look
As they discussed my insignificance,
She and my father, and I sitting by,—
I bore; I knew how brave a son they missed:
Philip had gaily run state-papers through,
While Charles was spelling at them painfully!
But Victor was my father spite of that.
"Duke Victor's entire life has been," I said,
"Innumerable efforts to one end;
"And on the point now of that end's success,
"Our Ducal turning to a Kingly crown,
"Where 's time to be reminded 't is his child
"He spurns?" And so I suffered—scarcely suffered,
Since I had you at length!

Polyxena. —To serve in place
Of monarch, minister, and mistress, Charles.

Charles. But, once that crown obtained, then was 't not like
Our lot would alter? "When he rests, takes breath,
"Glances around, sees who there 's left to love—
"Now that my mother 's dead, sees I am left—
"Is it not like he 'll love me at the last?"
Well, Savoy turns Sardinia; the Duke 's King:
Could I—precisely then—could you expect
His harshness to redouble? These few months
Have been . . . have been . . . Polyxena, do you

And God conduct me, or I lose myself!
What would he have? What is 't they want with me?
Him with this mistress and this minister,
—You see me and you hear him; judge us both!
Pronounce what I should do, Polyxena!

Polyxena. Endure, endure, beloved! Say you not
He is your father? All 's so incident
To novel sway! Beside, our life must change:
Or you 'll acquire his kingcraft, or he 'll find
Harshness a sorry way of teaching it.
I bear this—not that there 's so much to bear.

Charles. You bear? Do not I know that you, tho' bound
To silence for my sake, are perishing
Piecemeal beside me? And how otherwise
When every creephole from the hideous Court
Is stopped: the Minister to dog me, here—
The Mistress posted to entrap you, there!
And thus shall we grow old in such a life;
Not careless, never estranged,—but old: to alter
Our life, there is so much to alter!

Polyxena. Come—
Is it agreed that we forego complaint
Even at Turin, yet complain we here
At Rivoli? 'T were wiser you announced
Our presence to the King. What 's now afoot

I wonder? Not that any more 's to dread
Than every day's embarrassment: but guess
For me, why train so fast succeeded train
On the high-road, each gayer still than each!
I noticed your Archbishop's pursuivant,
The sable cloak and silver cross; such pomp
Bodes . . . what now, Charles? Can you conceive?

Charles. Not I.

Polyxena. A matter of some moment.

Charles. There 's our life!

Which of the group of loiterers that stare
From the lime-avenue, divines that I—
About to figure presently, he thinks,
In face of all assembled—am the one
Who knows precisely least about it?

Polyxena. Tush!
D'Ormea's contrivance!

Charles. Ay, how otherwise
Should the young Prince serve for the old King's foil?
—So that the simplest courtier may remark
'T were idle raising parties for a Prince
Content to linger the Court's laughing-stock.
Something, 't is like, about that weary business

[*Pointing to papers he has laid down, and which* POLYXENA *examines.*

—Not that I comprehend three words, of course,

After all last night's study.

Polyxena. The faint heart!
Why, as we rode and you rehearsed just now
Its substance . . . (that 's the folded speech I mean,
Concerning the Reduction of the Fiefs)
—What would you have?—I fancied while you spoke,
Some tones were just your father's.

Charles. Flattery!

Polyxena. I fancied so:—and here lurks, sure enough
My note upon the Spanish Claims! You 've mastered
The fief-speech thoroughly: this other, mind,
Is an opinion you deliver,—stay,
Best read it slowly over once to me;
Read—there 's bare time; you read it firmly—loud
—Rather loud, looking in his face,—don't sink
Your eye once—ay, thus! "If Spain claims . . ." begin
—Just as you look at me!

Charles. At you! Oh truly,
You have I seen, say, marshalling your troops,
Dismissing councils, or, through doors ajar,
Head sunk on hand, devoured by slow chagrins
—Then radiant, for a crown had all at once
Seemed possible again! I can behold
Him, whose least whisper ties my spirit fast,
In this sweet brow, nought could divert me from
Save objects like Sebastian's shameless lip,

Or worse, the clipped grey hair and dead white face
And dwindling eye as if it ached with guile,
D'Ormea wears . . .

[*As he kisses her, enter from the* KING'S *apartment*
D'ORMEA.

I said he would divert
My kisses from your brow!

D'Ormea [*aside*]. Here! So, King Victor
Spoke truth for once: and who 's ordained, but I
To make that memorable? Both in call,
As he declared. Were 't better gnash the teeth,
Or laugh outright now?

Charles [*to* POLYXENA]. What 's his visit for?

D'Ormea [*aside*]. I question if they even speak to me.

Polyxena [*to* CHARLES]. Face the man! He 'll suppose you fear him, else.

[*Aloud.*] The Marquis bears the King's command, no doubt?

D'Ormea [*aside*]. Precisely!—If I threatened him, perhaps?
Well, this at least is punishment enough!
Men used to promise punishment would come.

Charles. Deliver the King's message, Marquis!

D'Ormea [*aside*]. Ah—
So anxious for his fate? [*Aloud.*] A word, my Prince,

Before you see your father—just one word
Of counsel!

Charles. Oh, your counsel certainly!
Polyxena, the Marquis counsels us!
Well, sir? Be brief, however!

D'Ormea. What? You know
As much as I?—preceded me, most like,
In knowledge! So! ('T is in his eye, beside—
His voice: he knows it, and his heart 's on flame
Already.) You surmise why you, myself,
Del Borgo, Spava, fifty nobles more,
Are summoned thus?

Charles. Is the Prince used to know,
At any time, the pleasure of the King,
Before his minister?—Polyxena,
Stay here till I conclude my task: I feel
Your presence (smile not) through the walls, and take
Fresh heart. The King 's within that chamber?

D'Ormea [*passing the table whereon a paper lies, exclaims, as he glances at it*]. "Spain!"

Polyxena [*aside to* CHARLES]. Tarry awhile: what ails the minister?

D'Ormea. Madam, I do not often trouble you.
The Prince loathes, and you scorn me—let that pass!
But since it touches him and you, not me,
Bid the Prince listen!

Polyxena [*to* CHARLES]. Surely you will listen!
—Deceit?—those fingers crumpling up his vest?
Charles. Deceitful to the very fingers' ends!
D'Ormea [*who has approached them, overlooks the other paper* CHARLES *continues to hold*].
My project for the Fiefs! As I supposed!
Sir, I must give you light upon those measures
—For this is mine, and that I spied of Spain,
Mine too!
Charles. Release me! Do you gloze on me
Who bear in the world's face (that is, the world
You make for me at Turin) your contempt?
—Your measures?—When was not a hateful task
D'Ormea's imposition? Leave my robe!
What post can I bestow, what grant concede?
Or do you take me for the King?
D'Ormea. Not I!
Not yet for King,—not for, as yet, thank God,
One who in . . . shall I say a year, a month?
Ay!—shall be wretcheder than e'er was slave
In his Sardinia.—Europe's spectacle
And the world's bye-word! What? The Prince aggrieved
That I excluded him our counsels? Here
[*Touching the paper in* CHARLES'S *hand.*
Accept a method of extorting gold

From Savoy's nobles, who must wring its worth
In silver first from tillers of the soil,
Whose hinds again have to contribute brass
To make up the amount: there 's counsel, sir,
My counsel, one year old; and the fruit, this—
Savoy 's become a mass of misery
And wrath, which one man has to meet—the King:
You 're not the King! Another counsel, sir!
Spain entertains a project (here it lies)
Which, guessed, makes Austria offer that same King
Thus much to baffle Spain; he promises;
Then comes Spain, breathless lest she be forestalled,
Her offer follows; and he promises . . .

Charles. —Promises, sir, when he has just agreed
To Austria's offer?

D'Ormea. That 's a counsel, Prince!
But past our foresight, Spain and Austria (choosing
To make their quarrel up between themselves
Without the intervention of a friend)
Produce both treaties, and both promises . . .

Charles. How?

D'Ormea. Prince, a counsel! And the fruit of that?
Both parties covenant afresh, to fall
Together on their friend, blot out his name,
Abolish him from Europe. So, take note,
Here 's Austria and here 's Spain to fight against:

And what sustains the King but Savoy here,
A miserable people mad with wrongs?
You 're not the King!
Charles. Polyxena, you said
All would clear up: all does clear up to me.
D'Ormea. Clear up! 'T is no such thing to envy, then?
You see the King's state in its length and breadth?
You blame me now for keeping you aloof
From counsels and the fruit of counsels? Wait
Till I explain this morning's business!
Charles [*aside*]. No—
Stoop to my father, yes,—D'Ormea, no:
—The King's son, not to the King's counsellor!
I will do something, but at least retain
The credit of my deed. [*Aloud*]. Then it is this
You now expressly come to tell me?
D'Ormea. This
To tell! You apprehend me?
Charles. Perfectly.
Further, D'Ormea, you have shown yourself,
For the first time these many weeks and months,
Disposed to do my bidding?
D'Ormea. From the heart!
Charles. Acquaint my father, first, I wait his pleasure
Next . . . or, I 'll tell you at a fitter time.
Acquaint the King!

D'Ormea [*aside*]. If I 'scape Victor yet!
First, to prevent this stroke at me: if not,—
Then, to avenge it! [*To* CHARLES.] Gracious sir, I go. [*Goes.*

Charles. God, I forbore! Which more offends, that man
Or that man's master? Is it come to this?
Have they supposed (the sharpest insult yet)
I needed e'en his intervention? No!
No—dull am I, conceded,—but so dull,
Scarcely! Their step decides me.

Polyxena. How decides?

Charles. You would be freed D'Ormea's eye and hers?
—Could fly the court with me and live content?
So, this it is for which the knights assemble!
The whispers and the closeting of late,
The savageness and insolence of old,
—For this!

Polyxena. What mean you?

Charles. How? You fail to catch
Their clever plot? I missed it, but could you?
These last two months of care to inculcate
How dull I am,—D'Ormea's present visit
To prove that, being dull, I might be worse
Were I a King—as wretched as now dull

You recognize in it no winding up
Of a long plot?

Polyxena. Why should there be a plot?

Charles. The crown's secure now; I should shame the crown—
An old complaint; the point is, how to gain
My place for one, more fit in Victor's eyes,
His mistress the Sebastian's child.

Polyxena. In truth?

Charles. They dare not quite dethrone Sardinia's Prince:
But they may descant on my dulness till
They sting me into even praying them
Grant leave to hide my head, resign my state,
And end the coil. Not see now? In a word,
They 'd have me tender them myself my rights
As one incapable;—some cause for that,
Since I delayed thus long to see their drift!
I shall apprise the King he may resume
My rights this moment.

Polyxena. Pause! I dare not think
So ill of Victor.

Charles. Think no ill of him!

Polyxena. —Nor think him, then, so shallow as to suffer
His purpose be divined thus easily.

And yet—you are the last of a great line ;
There 's a great heritage at stake ; new days
Seemed to await this newest of the realms
Of Europe :—Charles, you must withstand this !

Charles. Ah—
You dare not then renounce the splendid Court
For one whom all the world despises ? Speak !

Polyxena. My gentle husband, speak I will, and truth.
Were this as you believe, and I once sure
Your duty lay in so renouncing rule,
I could . . . could ? Oh what happiness it were—
To live, my Charles, and die, alone with you !

Charles. I grieve I asked you. To the presence, then !
By this, D'Ormea acquaints the King, no doubt,
He fears I am too simple for mere hints,
And that no less will serve than Victor's mouth
Demonstrating in council what I am.
I have not breathed, I think, these many years !

Polyxena. Why, it may be !—if he desire to wed
That woman, call legitimate her child.

Charles. You see as much ? Oh, let his will have way !
You 'll not repent confiding in me, love ?
There 's many a brighter spot in Piedmont, far,
Than Rivoli. I 'll seek him : or, suppose
You hear first how I mean to speak my mind ?

—Loudly and firmly both, this time, be sure!
I yet may see your Rhine-land, who can tell?
Once away, ever then away! I breathe.

Polyxena. And I too breathe.

Charles. Come, my Polyxena!

KING VICTOR.

PART II.

Enter King VICTOR, *bearing the Regalia on a cushion, from his apartment. He calls loudly.*

Victor. D'Ormea!—for patience fails me, treading thus
Among the obscure trains I have laid,—my knights
Safe in the hall here—in that anteroom,
My son,—D'Ormea, where? Of this, one touch—
[*Laying down the crown.*
This fireball to these mute black cold trains—then
Outbreak enough!
[*Contemplating it.*] To lose all, after all!
This, glancing o'er my house for ages—shaped,
Brave meteor, like the crown of Cyprus now,
Jerusalem, Spain, England, every change
The braver,—and when I have clutched a prize
My ancestry died wan with watching for,
To lose it!—by a slip, a fault, a trick
Learnt to advantage once and not unlearned
When past the use,—"just this once more" (I thought)
"Use it with Spain and Austria happily,

"And then away with trick!" An oversight
I 'd have repaired thrice over, any time
These fifty years, must happen now! There 's peace
At length; and I, to make the most of peace,
Ventured my project on our people here,
As needing not their help: which Europe knows,
And means, cold-blooded, to dispose herself
(Apart from plausibilities of war)
To crush the new-made King—who ne'er till now
Feared her. As Duke, I lost each foot of earth
And laughed at her: my name was left, my sword
Left, all was left! But she can take, she knows,
This crown, herself conceded . . . That 's to try,
Kind Europe! My career 's not closed as yet!
This boy was ever subject to my will,
Timid and tame—the fitter! D'Ormea, too—
What if the sovereign also rid himself
Of thee, his prime of parasites?—I delay!
D'Ormea! [*As* D'ORMEA *enters, the* KING *seats himself.*
My son, the Prince—attends he?

D'Ormea. Sir,
He does attend. The crown prepared!—it seems
That you persist in your resolve.

Victor. Who's come?
The chancellor and the chamberlain? My knights?

D'Ormea. The whole Annunziata. If, my liege,

Your fortune had not tottered worse than now . . .

Victor. Del Borgo has drawn up the schedules? mine—
My son's, too? Excellent! Only, beware
Of the least blunder, or we look but fools.
First, you read the Annulment of the Oaths;
Del Borgo follows . . . no, the Prince shall sign;
Then let Del Borgo read the Instrument:
On which, I enter.

D'Ormea. Sir, this may be truth;
You, sir, may do as you affect—may break
Your engine, me, to pieces: try at least
If not a spring remain worth saving! Take
My counsel as I 've counselled many times!
What if the Spaniard and the Austrian threat?
There 's England, Holland, Venice—which ally
Select you?

Victor. Aha! Come, D'Ormea,—"truth"
Was on your lip a minute since. Allies?
I 've broken faith with Venice, Holland, England
—As who knows if not you?

D'Ormea. But why with me
Break faith—with one ally, your best, break faith?

Victor. When first I stumbled on you, Marquis—'t was
At Mondovi—a little lawyer's clerk . . .

D'Ormea. Therefore your soul's ally!—who brought
you through

Your quarrel with the Pope, at pains enough—
Who simply echoed you in these affairs—
On whom you cannot therefore visit these
Affairs' ill-fortune—whom you trust to guide
You safe (yes, on my soul) through these affairs!

Victor. I was about to notice, had you not
Prevented me, that since that great town kept
With its chicane D'Ormea's satchel stuffed
And D'Ormea's self sufficiently recluse,
He missed a sight,—my naval armament
When I burned Toulon. How the skiff exults
Upon the galliot's wave!—rises its height,
O'ertops it even; but the great wave bursts,
And hell-deep in the horrible profound
Buries itself the galliot: shall the skiff
Think to escape the sea's black trough in turn?
Apply this: you have been my minister
—Next me, above me possibly;—sad post,
Huge care, abundant lack of peace of mind;
Who would desiderate the eminence?
You gave your soul to get it; you 'd yet give
Your soul to keep it, as I mean you shall,
D'Ormea! What if the wave ebbed with me?
Whereas it cants you to another crest;
I toss you to my son; ride out your ride!

D'Ormea. Ah, you so much despise me?

Victor. You, D'Ormea?
Nowise: and I 'll inform you why. A king
Must in his time have many ministers,
And I 've been rash enough to part with mine
When I thought proper. Of the tribe, not one
(. . . Or wait, did Pianezze?—ah, just the same!)
Not one of them, ere his remonstrance reached
The length of yours, but has assured me (commonly
Standing much as you stand, or nearer, say,
The door to make his exit on his speech)
—I should repent of what I did. D'Ormea,
Be candid, you approached it when I bade you
Prepare the schedules! But you stopped in time,
You have not so assured me: how should I
Despise you then?

Enter CHARLES.

Victor [*changing his tone*]. Are you instructed? Do
My order, point by point! About it, sir!
D'Ormea. You so despise me! [*Aside.*] One last stay
remains—
The boy's discretion there.
[*To* CHARLES.] For your sake, Prince,
I pleaded, wholly in your interest,
To save you from this fate!
Charles [*aside*]. Must I be told
The Prince was supplicated for—by him?

Victor [*to* D'Ormea]. Apprise Del Borgo, Spava, and the rest,
Our son attends them; then return.
D'Ormea. One word!
Charles [*aside*]. A moment's pause and they would drive me hence,
I do believe!
D'Ormea [*aside*]. Let but the boy be firm!
Victor. You disobey?
Charles [*to* D'Ormea]. You do not disobey
Me, at least? Did you promise that or no?
D'Ormea. Sir, I am yours: what would you? Yours am I!
Charles. When I have said what I shall say, 't is like
Your face will ne'er again disgust me. Go!
Through you, as through a breast of glass, I see.
And for your conduct, from my youth till now,
Take my contempt! You might have spared me much.
Secured me somewhat, nor so harmed yourself:
That 's over now. Go, ne'er to come again!
D'Ormea. As son, the father—father as, the son!
My wits! My wits! [*Goes.*
Victor [*seated*]. And you, what meant you, pray,
Speaking thus to D'Ormea?
Charles. Let us not
Waste words upon D'Ormea! Those I spent

Have half unsettled what I came to say.
His presence vexes to my very soul.
Victor. One called to manage a kingdom, Charles, needs heart
To bear up under worse annoyances
Than seems D'Ormea—to me, at least.
Charles [*aside*]. Ah, good!
He keeps me to the point. Then be it so.
[*Aloud.*] Last night, sir, brought me certain papers—these—
To be reported on,—your way of late.
Is it last night's result that you demand?
Victor. For God's sake, what has night brought forth? Pronounce
The . . . what 's your word?—result!
Charles. Sir, that had proved
Quite worthy of your sneer, no doubt:—a few
Lame thoughts, regard for you alone could wring,
Lame as they are, from brains like mine, believe!
As 't is, sir, I am spared both toil and sneer.
These are the papers.
Victor. Well, sir? I suppose
You hardly burned them. Now for your result!
Charles. I never should have done great things of course,
But . . . oh my father, had you loved me more!

Victor. Loved? [*Aside.*] Has D'Ormea played me false,
I wonder?
[*Aloud.*] Why, Charles, a king's love is diffused—yourself
May overlook, perchance, your part in it.
Our monarchy is absolutest now
In Europe, or my trouble 's thrown away.
I love, my mode, that subjects each and all
May have the power of loving, all and each,
Their mode: I doubt not, many have their sons
To trifle with, talk soft to, all day long:
I have that crown, this chair, D'Ormea, Charles!
Charles. 'Tis well I am a subject then, not you.
Victor [*aside*]. D'Ormea has told him everything.
[*Aloud.*] Aha!
I apprehend you: when all 's said, you take
Your private station to be prized beyond
My own, for instance?
Charles. —Do and ever did
So take it: 't is the method you pursue
That grieves . . .
Victor. These words! Let me express, my friend,
Your thoughts. You penetrate what I supposed
Secret. D'Ormea plies his trade betimes!
I purpose to resign my crown to you.
Charles. To me?
Victor. Now,—in that chamber.

Charles. You resign
The crown to me?
Victor. And time enough, Charles, sure?
Confess with me, at four-and-sixty years
A crown 's a load. I covet quiet once
Before I die, and summoned you for that.
Charles. 'T is I will speak: you ever hated me.
I bore it,—have insulted me, borne too—
Now you insult yourself; and I remember
What I believed you, what you really are,
And cannot bear it. What! My life has passed
Under your eye, tormented as you know,—
Your whole sagacities, one after one,
At leisure brought to play on me—to prove me
A fool, I thought and I submitted; now
You 'd prove . . . what would you prove me?
Victor. This to me?
I hardly know you!
Charles. Know me? Oh indeed
You do not! Wait till I complain next time
Of my simplicity!—for here 's a sage
Knows the world well, is not to be deceived,
And his experience and his Macchiavels,
D'Ormeas, teach him—what?—that I this while
Have envied him his crown! He has not smiled,
I warrant,—has not eaten, drunk, nor slept,

For I was plotting with my Princess yonder!
Who knows what we might do or might not do?
Go now, be politic, astound the world!
That sentry in the antechamber—nay,
The varlet who disposed this precious trap
[*Pointing to the crown.*
That was to take me—ask them if they think
Their own sons envy them their posts!—Know me!

Victor. But you know me, it seems: so, learn in brief.
My pleasure. This assembly is convened . . .

Charles. Tell me, that woman put it in your head!
You were not sole contriver of the scheme,
My father!

Victor. Now observe me, sir! I jest
Seldom—on these points, never. Here, I say,
The knights assemble to see me concede,
And you accept, Sardinia's crown.

Charles. Farewell!
'T were vain to hope to change this: I can end it.
Not that I cease from being yours, when sunk
Into obscurity: I'll die for you,
But not annoy you with my presence. Sir,
Farewell! Farewell!

Enter D'Ormea.

D'Ormea [*aside*]. Ha, sure he 's changed again—

Means not to fall into the cunning trap!
Then Victor, I shall yet escape you, Victor!

Victor [*suddenly placing the crown upon the head of* CHARLES]. D'Ormea, your King!
[*To* CHARLES.] My son, obey me! Charles,
Your father, clearer-sighted than yourself,
Decides it must be so. 'Faith, this looks real!
My reasons after; reason upon reason
After: but now, obey me! Trust in me!
By this, you save Sardinia, you save me!
Why, the boy swoons! [*To* D'ORMEA.] Come this side!

D'Ormea [*as* CHARLES *turns from him to* VICTOR]. You persist?

Victor. Yes, I conceive the gesture's meaning. 'Faith,
He almost seems to hate you: how is that?
Be re-assured, my Charles! Is 't over now?
Then, Marquis, tell the new King what remains
To do! A moment's work. Del Borgo reads
The Act of Abdication out, you sign it,
Then I sign; after that, come back to me.

D'Ormea. Sir, for the last time, pause!

Victor. . . . . . Five minutes longer
I am your sovereign, Marquis. Hesitate—
And I 'll so turn those minutes to account
That . . . Ay, you recollect me! [*Aside.*] Could I bring

My foolish mind to undergo the reading
That Act of Abdication!

[*As* CHARLES *motions* D'ORMEA *to precede him.*

Thanks, dear Charles!

[CHARLES *and* D'ORMEA *retire.*

Victor. A novel feature in the boy,—indeed
Just what I feared he wanted most. Quite right,
This earnest tone: your truth, now, for effect!
It answers every purpose: with that look,
That voice,—I hear him: "I began no treaty,"
(He speaks to Spain), "nor ever dreamed of this
"You show me; this I from my soul regret;
"But if my father signed it, bid not me
"Dishonour him—who gave me all, beside:"
And, "True," says Spain, "'t were harsh to visit that
"Upon the Prince." Then come the nobles trooping:
"I grieve at these exactions—I had cut
"This hand off ere impose them; but shall I
"Undo my father's deed?"—and they confer:
"Doubtless he was no party, after all;
"Give the Prince time!"

Ay, give us time, but time!
Only, he must not, when the dark day comes,
Refer our friends to me and frustrate all.
We 'll have no child's play, no desponding fits,
No Charles at each cross turn entreating Victor

To take his crown again. Guard against that!

Enter D'Ormea.

Long live King Charles!

No—Charles's counsellor!

Well, is it over, Marquis? Did I jest?

D'Ormea. "King Charles!" What then may you be?

Victor. Anything!

A country gentleman that, cured of bustle,
Now beats a quick retreat toward Chambery,
Would hunt and hawk and leave you noisy folk
To drive your trade without him. I'm Count Remont—
Count Tende—any little place's Count!

D'Ormea. Then Victor, Captain against Catinat
At Staffarde, where the French beat you; and Duke
At Turin, where you beat the French; King late
Of Savoy, Piedmont, Montferrat, Sardinia,
—Now, "any little place's Count"—

Victor. Proceed!

D'Ormea. Breaker of vows to God, who crowned you first;
Breaker of vows to man, who kept you since;
Most profligate to me who outraged God
And man to serve you, and am made pay crimes
I was but privy to, by passing thus
To your imbecile son—who, well you know,

Must—(when the people here, and nations there,
Clamour for you the main delinquent, slipped
From King to—"Count of any little place")
Must needs surrender me, all in his reach,—
I, sir, forgive you: for I see the end—
See you on your return—(you will return)—
To him you trust, a moment . . .

Victor. Trust him? How?
My poor man, merely a prime-minister,
Make me know where my trust errs!

D'Ormea. In his fear,
His love, his—— but discover for yourself
What you are weakest, trusting in!

Victor. Aha,
D'Ormea, not a shrewder scheme than this
In your repertory? You know old Victor —
Vain, choleric, inconstant, rash—(I 've heard
Talkers who little thought the King so close)
Felicitous now, were 't not, to provoke him
To clean forget, one minute afterward,
His solemn act, and call the nobles back
And pray them give again the very power
He has abjured?—for the dear sake of what?
Vengeance on you, D'Ormea! No: such am I,
Count Tende or Count anything you please,
—Only, the same that did the things you say,

And, among other things you say not, used
Your finest fibre, meanest muscle,—you
I used, and now, since you will have it so,
Leave to your fate—mere lumber in the midst,
You and your works. Why, what on earth beside
Are you made for, you sort of ministers?

D'Ormea. Not left, though, to my fate! Your witless son
Has more wit than to load himself with lumber:
He foils you that way, and I follow you.

Victor. Stay with my son—protect the weaker side!

D'Ormea. Ay, to be tossed the people like a rag,
And flung by them for Spain and Austria's sport,
Abolishing the record of your part
In all this perfidy!

Victor. Prevent, beside,
My own return!

D'Ormea. That 's half prevented now!
'T will go hard but you find a wondrous charm
In exile, to discredit me. The Alps,
Silk-mills to watch, vines asking vigilance—
Hounds open for the stag, your hawk 's a-wing—
Brave days that wait the Louis of the South,
Italy's Janus!

Victor. So, the lawyer's clerk
Won't tell me that I shall repent!

D'Ormea. You give me
Full leave to ask if you repent?

Victor. Whene'er
Sufficient time 's elapsed for that, you judge!

[*Shouts inside* "KING CHARLES!"

D'Ormea. Do you repent?

Victor [*after a slight pause*]. . . . I 've kept them waiting? Yes!
Come in, complete the Abdication, sir! [*They go out.*

Enter POLYXENA.

Polyxena. A shout! The sycophants are free of Charles!
Oh is not this like Italy? No fruit
Of his or my distempered fancy, this,
But just an ordinary fact! Beside,
Here they 've set forms for such proceedings; Victor
Imprisoned his own mother: he should know,
If any, how a son 's to be deprived
Of a son's right. Our duty 's palpable.
Ne'er was my husband for the wily king
And the unworthy subjects: be it so!
Come you safe out of them, my Charles! Our life
Grows not the broad and dazzling life, I dreamed
Might prove your lot; for strength was shut in you
None guessed but I—strength which, untramelled once,

Had little shamed your vaunted ancestry—
Patience and self-devotion, fortitude,
Simplicity and utter truthfulness
—All which, they shout to lose!
So, now my work
Begins—to save him from regret. Save Charles
Regret?—the noble nature! He 's not made
Like these Italians: 't is a German soul.

CHARLES *enters crowned.*

Oh, where 's the King's heir? Gone!—the Crown
Prince? Gone!—
Where 's Savoy? Gone!—Sardinia? Gone! But
Charles
Is left! And when my Rhine-land bowers arrive,
If he looked almost handsome yester-twilight
As his grey eyes seemed widening into black
Because I praised him, then how will he look?
Farewell, you stripped and whited mulberry-trees
Bound each to each by lazy ropes of vine!
Now I 'll teach you my language: I 'm not forced
To speak Italian now, Charles?
[*She sees the crown.*] What is this?
Answer me—who has done this? Answer!
Charles. He!
I am King now.

Polyxena. Oh worst, worst, worst of all!
Tell me! What, Victor? He has made you King?
What 's he then? What 's to follow this? You, King?
Charles. Have I done wrong? Yes, for you were not by!
Polyxena. Tell me from first to last.
Charles. Hush—a new world
Brightens before me; he is moved away
—The dark form that eclipsed it, he subsides
Into a shape supporting me like you,
And I, alone, tend upward, more and more
Tend upward: I am grown Sardinia's King.
Polyxena. Now stop: was not this Victor, Duke of Savoy
At ten years old?
Charles. He was.
Polyxena. And the Duke spent
Since then, just four-and-fifty years in toil
To be—what?
Charles. King.
Polyxena. Then why unking himself?
Charles. These years are cause enough.
Polyxena. The only cause?
Charles. Some new perplexities.
Polyxena. Which you can solve
Although he cannot?

Charles. He assures me so.
Polyxena. And this he means shall last—how long?
Charles. How long?
Think you I fear the perils I confront?
He 's praising me before the people's face—
My people!
Polyxena. Then he 's changed—grown kind, the King?
Where can the trap be?
Charles. Heart and soul I pledge!
My father, could I guard the crown you gained,
Transmit as I received it,—all good else
Would I surrender!
Polyxena. Ah, it opens then
Before you, all you dreaded formerly?
You are rejoiced to be a king, my Charles?
Charles. So much to dare? The better;—much to dread?
The better. I 'll adventure though alone.
Triumph or die, there 's Victor still to witness
Who dies or triumphs—either way, alone!
Polyxena. Once I had found my share in triumph, Charles,
Or death.
Charles. But you are I! But you I call
To take, Heaven's proxy, vows I tendered Heaven
A moment since. I will deserve the crown!

Polyxena. You will. [*Aside.*] No doubt it were a glorious thing
For any people, if a heart like his
Ruled over it. I would I saw the trap.

Enter VICTOR.

'T is he must show me.
Victor. So, the mask falls off
An old man's foolish love at last. Spare thanks!
I know you, and Polyxena I know.
Here 's Charles—I am his guest now—does he bid me
Be seated? And my light-haired blue-eyed child
Must not forget the old man far away
At Chambery, who dozes while she reigns.
Polyxena. Most grateful shall we now be, talking least
Of gratitude—indeed of anything
That hinders what yourself must need to say
To Charles.
Charles. Pray speak, sir!
Victor. 'Faith, not much to say:
Only what shows itself, you once i' the point
Of sight. You 're now the King: you 'll comprehend
Much you may oft have wondered at—the shifts,
Dissimulation, wiliness I showed.
For what 's our post? Here 's Savoy and here 's Piedmont,

Here 's Montferrat—a breadth here, a space there—
To o'ersweep all these, what 's one weapon worth?
I often think of how they fought in Greece:
(Or Rome, which was it? You 're the scholar, Charles!)
You made a front-thrust? But if your shield too
Were not adroitly planted, some shrewd knave
Reached you behind; and him foiled, straight if thong
And handle of that shield were not cast loose,
And you enabled to outstrip the wind,
Fresh foes assailed you, either side; 'scape these,
And reach your place of refuge—e'en then, odds
If the gate opened unless breath enough
Were left in you to make its lord a speech.
Oh, you will see!

Charles. No: straight on shall I go,
Truth helping; win with it or die with it.

Victor. 'Faith, Charles, you 're not made Europe's fighting-man!
The barrier-guarder, if you please. You clutch
Hold and consolidate, with envious France
This side, with Austria that, the territory
I held—ay, and will hold . . . which *you* shall hold
Despite the couple! But I 've surely earned
Exemption from these weary politics,
—The privilege to prattle with my son
And daughter here, though Europe wait the while.

Polyxena. Nay, sir,—at Chambery, away for ever,
As soon you will be, 't is farewell we bid you:
Turn these few fleeting moments to account!
'T is just as though it were a death.

Victor. Indeed!

Polyxena [*aside*]. Is the trap there?

Charles. Ay, call this parting—death!
The sacreder your memory becomes.
If I misrule Sardinia, how bring back
My father?

Victor. I mean . . .

Polyxena [*who watches* VICTOR *narrowly this while*].
Your father does not mean
You should be ruling for your father's sake:
It is your people must concern you wholly
Instead of him. You mean this, sir? (He drops
My hand!)

Charles. That people is now part of me.

Victor. About the people! I took certain measures
Some short time since . . . Oh, I know well, you know
But little of my measures! These affect
The nobles; we 've resumed some grants, imposed
A tax or two: prepare yourself, in short,
For clamour on that score. Mark me: you yield
No jot of aught entrusted you!

Polyxena. No jot
You yield!

Charles. My father, when I took the oath,
Although my eye might stray in search of yours,
I heard it, understood it, promised God
What you require. Till from this eminence
He move me, here I keep, nor shall concede
The meanest of my rights.

Victor [*aside*]. The boy 's a fool!
—Or rather, I 'm a fool: for, what 's wrong here?
To-day the sweets of reigning: let to-morrow
Be ready with its bitters.

Enter D'Ormea.

There 's beside
Somewhat to press upon your notice first.

Charles. Then why delay it for an instant, sir?
That Spanish claim perchance? And, now you speak.
—This morning, my opinion was mature,
Which, boy-like, I was bashful in producing
To one I ne'er am like to fear in future!
My thought is formed upon that Spanish claim.

Victor. Betimes indeed. Not now, Charles! You require
A host of papers on it.

D'Ormea [*coming forward*]. Here they are.
[*To* Charles.] I, sir, was minister and much beside
Of the late monarch; to say little, him

I served: on you I have, to say e'en less,
No claim. This case contains those papers: with them
I tender you my office.

Victor [*hastily.*] Keep him, Charles!
There 's reason for it—many reasons: you
Distrust him, nor are so far wrong there,—but
He 's mixed up in this matter—he 'll desire
To quit you, for occasions known to me:
Do not accept those reasons: have him stay!

Polyxena [*aside*]. His minister thrust on us!

Charles [*to* D'Ormea]. Sir, believe,
In justice to myself, you do not need
E'en this commending: howsoe'er might seem
My feelings toward you, as a private man,
They quit me in the vast and untried field
Of action. Though I shall myself (as late
In your own hearing I engaged to do)
Preside o'er my Sardinia, yet your help
Is necessary. Think the past forgotten
And serve me now!

D'Ormea. I did not offer you
My service—would that I could serve you, sir!
As for the Spanish matter . . .

Victor. But despatch
At least the dead, in my good daughter's phrase,
Before the living! Help to house me safe

Ere with D'Ormea you set the world a-gape!
Here is a paper—will you overlook
What I propose reserving for my needs?
I get as far from you as possible:
Here 's what I reckon my expenditure.

Charles [*reading*]. A miserable fifty thousand crowns—

Victor. Oh, quite enough for country gentlemen!
Beside the exchequer happens . . . but find out
All that, yourself!

Charles [*still reading*]. "Count Tende"—what means this?

Victor. Me: you were but an infant when I burst
Through the defile of Tende upon France.
Had only my allies kept true to me!
No matter. Tende 's, then, a name I take
Just as . . .

D'Ormea. —The Marchioness Sebastian takes
The name of Spigno.

Charles. How, sir?

Victor [*to* D'Ormea]. Fool! All that
Was for my own detailing. [*To* Charles.] That anon!

Charles [*to* D'Ormea]. Explain what you have said, sir!

D'Ormea. I supposed
The marriage of the King to her I named,
Profoundly kept a secret these few weeks,
Was not to be one, now he 's Count.

Polyxena [*aside*]. With us
The minister—with him the mistress!
Charles [*to* VICTOR]. No—
Tell me you have not taken her—that woman
To live with, past recall!
Victor. And where 's the crime . . .
Polyxena [*to* CHARLES]. True, sir, this is a matter past recall
And past your cognizance. A day before,
And you had been compelled to note this: now,—
Why note it? The King saved his House from shame:
What the Count did, is no concern of yours.
Charles [*after a pause*]. The Spanish claim, D'Ormea!
Victor. Why, my son,
I took some ill-advised . . . one's age, in fact,
Spoils everything: though I was overreached,
A younger brain, we 'll trust, may extricate
Sardinia readily. To-morrow, D'Ormea,
Inform the King!
D'Ormea [*without regarding* VICTOR, *and leisurely*]. Thus stands the case with Spain:
When first the Infant Carlos claimed his proper
Succession to the throne of Tuscany . . .
Victor. I tell you, that stands over! Let that rest!
There is the policy!
Charles [*to* D'ORMEA]. Thus much I know,
And more—too much: the remedy?

D'Ormea. Of course!
No glimpse of one.
Victor. No remedy at all!
It makes the remedy itself—time makes it.
D'Ormea [*to* CHARLES]. But if . . .
Victor [*still more hastily*]. In fine, I shall take care of that:
And, with another project that I have . . .
D'Ormea [*turning on him*]. Oh, since Count Tende means to take again
King Victor's crown!—
Polyxena [*throwing herself at* VICTOR'S *feet*]. E'en now retake it, sir!
Oh speak! We are your subjects both, once more!
Say it—a word effects it! You meant not,
Nor do mean now, to take it: but you must!
'T is in you—in your nature—and the shame 's
Not half the shame 't would grow to afterwards!
Charles. Polyxena!
Polyxena. A word recalls the knights—
Say it! What 's promising and what 's the past?
Say you are still King Victor!
D'Ormea. Better say
The Count repents, in brief! [VICTOR *rises.*
Charles. With such a crime
I have not charged you, sir!
Polyxena. (Charles turns from me!)

SECOND YEAR, 1731.—KING CHARLES.

PART I.

Enter Queen POLYXENA *and* D'ORMEA.—*A pause.*

Polyxena. And now, sir, what have you to say?
D'Ormea. Count Tende . .
Polyxena. Affirm not I betrayed you; you resolve
On uttering this strange intelligence
—Nay, post yourself to find me ere I reach
The capital, because you know King Charles
Tarries a day or two at Evian baths
Behind me:—but take warning,—here and thus
[*Seating herself in the royal seat.*
I listen, if I listen—not your friend.
Explicitly the statement, if you still
Persist to urge it on me, must proceed:
I am not made for aught else.
D'Ormea. Good! Count Tende . . .
Polyxena. I, who mistrust you, shall acquaint King Charles
Who even more mistrusts you.

D'Ormea. Does he so?

Polyxena. Why should he not?

D'Ormea. Ay, why not? Motives, seek
You virtuous people, motives! Say, I serve
God at the devil's bidding—will that do?
I 'm proud: our people have been pacified,
Really I know not how—

Polyxena. By truthfulness.

D'Ormea. Exactly; that shows I had nought to do
With pacifying them. Our foreign perils
Also exceed my means to stay: but here
'T is otherwise, and my pride 's piqued. Count Tende
Completes a full year's absence: would you, madam,
Have the old monarch back, his mistress back,
His measures back? I pray you, act upon
My counsel, or they will be.

Polyxena. When?

D'Ormea. Let 's think.
Home-matters settled—Victor 's coming now;
Let foreign matters settle—Victor 's here
Unless I stop him; as I will, this way.

Polyxena [*reading the papers he presents*]. If this
should prove a plot 'twixt you and Victor?
You seek annoyances to give the pretext
For what you say you fear.

D'Ormea. Oh, possibly!

I go for nothing. Only show King Charles
That thus Count Tende purposes return,
And style me his inviter, if you please!

Polyxena. Half of your tale is true; most like, the Count
Seeks to return: but why stay you with us?
To aid in such emergencies.

D'Ormea. Keep safe
Those papers: or, to serve me, leave no proof
I thus have counselled! When the Count returns,
And the King abdicates, 't will stead me little
To have thus counselled.

Polyxena. The King abdicate!

D'Ormea. He 's good, we knew long since—wise, we discover—
Firm, let us hope:—but I 'd have gone to work
With him away. Well!

[CHARLES *without.*] In the Council Chamber?

D'Ormea. All 's lost!

Polyxena. Oh, surely not King Charles! He 's changed—
That 's not this year's care-burthened voice and step:
'T is last year's step, the Prince's voice!

D'Ormea. I know.

[*Enter* CHARLES:—D'ORMEA *retiring a little.*

Charles. Now wish me joy, Polyxena! Wish it me

The old way! [*She embraces him.*
There was too much cause for that!
But I have found myself again. What news
At Turin? Oh, if you but felt the load
I 'm free of—free! I said this year would end
Or it, or me—but I am free, thank God!

Polyxena. How, Charles?

Charles. You do not guess? The day I found
Sardinia's hideous coil, at home, abroad,
And how my father was involved in it,—
Of course, I vowed to rest and smile no more
Until I cleared his name from obloquy.
We did the people right—'t was much to gain
That point, redress our nobles' grievance, too—
But that took place here, was no crying shame:
All must be done abroad,—if I abroad
Appeased the justly-angered Powers, destroyed
The scandal, took down Victor's name at last
From a bad eminence, I then might breathe
And rest! No moment was to lose. Behold
The proud result—a Treaty, Austria, Spain
Agree to—

D'Ormea [*aside*]. I shall merely stipulate
For an experienced headsman.

Charles. Not a soul
Is compromised: the blotted past 's a blank:

Even D'Ormea escapes unquestioned. See!
It reached me from Vienna; I remained
At Evian to despatch the Count his news;
'T is gone to Chambery a week ago—
And here am I: do I deserve to feel
Your warm white arms around me?

D'Ormea [*coming forward*]. He knows that?

Charles. What, in Heaven's name, means this?

D'Ormea. He knows that matters
Are settled at Vienna? Not too late!
Plainly, unless you post this very hour
Some man you trust (say, me) to Chambery
And take precautions I acquaint you with,
Your father will return here.

Charles. Are you crazed,
D'Ormea? Here? For what? As well return
To take his crown!

D'Ormea. He will return for that.

Charles [*to* POLYXENA]. You have not listened to this man?

Polyxena. He spoke
About your safety—and I listened.

[*He disengages himself from her arms.*

Charles [*to* D'ORMEA]. What
Apprised you of the Count's intentions?

D'Ormea. Me?

His heart, sir; you may not be used to read
Such evidence however; therefore read
[*Pointing to* POLYXENA'S *papers.*
My evidence.

Charles [*to* POLYXENA]. Oh, worthy this of you!
And of your speech I never have forgotten,
Though I professed forgetfulness; which haunts me
As if I did not know how false it was;
Which made me toil unconsciously thus long
That there might be no least occasion left
For aught of its prediction coming true!
And now, when there is left no least occasion
To instigate my father to such crime—
When I might venture to forget (I hoped)
That speech and recognize Polyxena—
Oh worthy, to revive, and tenfold worse,
That plague! D'Ormea at your ear, his slanders
Still in your hand! Silent?

Polyxena. As the wronged are.

Charles. And you, D'Ormea, since when have you presumed
To spy upon my father? I conceive
What that wise paper shows, and easily.
Since when?

D'Ormea. The when and where and how belong
To me. 'T is sad work, but I deal in such.

You ofttimes serve yourself; I 'd serve you here:
Use makes me not so squeamish. In a word,
Since the first hour he went to Chambery,
Of his seven servants, five have I suborned.

Charles. You hate my father?

D'Ormea. Oh, just as you will!
[*Looking at* POLYXENA.

A minute since, I loved him—hate him, now!
What matter?—if you ponder just one thing:
Has he that treaty?—he is setting forward
Already. Are your guards here?

Charles. Well for you
They are not! [*To* POLYXENA]. Him I knew of old, but you—
To hear that pickthank, further his designs! [*To* D'ORMEA.
Guards?—were they here, I'd bid them, for your trouble,
Arrest you.

D'Ormea. Guards you shall not want. I lived
The servant of your choice, not of your need.
You never greatly needed me till now
That you discard me. This is my arrest.
Again I tender you my charge—its duty
Would bid me press you read those documents.
Here, sir! [*Offering his badge of office.*

Charles [*taking it*]. The papers also! Do you think
I dare not read them?

Polyxena. Read them, sir!

Charles. They prove,
My father, still a month within the year
Since he so solemnly consigned it me,
Means to resume his crown? They shall prove that.
Or my best dungeon . . .

D'Ormea. Even say, Chambery!
'T is vacant, I surmise, by this.

Charles. You prove
Your words or pay their forfeit, sir. Go there!
Polyxena, one chance to rend the veil
Thickening and blackening 'twixt us two! Do say,
You 'll see the falsehood of the charges proved!
Do say, at least, you wish to see them proved
False charges—my heart's love of other times!

Polyxena. Ah, Charles!

Charles [*to* D'ORMEA]. Precede me, sir!

D'Ormea. And I'm at length
A martyr for the truth! No end, they say,
Of miracles. My conscious innocence!

[*As they go out, enter—by the middle door, at which he pauses*—VICTOR.

Victor. Sure I heard voices? No. Well, I do best
To make at once for this, the heart o' the place.
The old room! Nothing changed! So near my seat,

D'Ormea? [*Pushing away the stool which is by the* KING'S *chair.*

I want that meeting over first,
I know not why. Tush, he, D'Ormea, slow
To hearten me, the supple knave? That burst
Of spite so eased him! He 'll inform me . . .
What?
Why come I hither? All 's in rough: let all
Remain rough. There 's full time to draw back—nay,
There 's nought to draw back from, as yet; whereas,
If reason should be, to arrest a course
Of error—reason good, to interpose
And save, as I have saved so many times,
Our House, admonish my son's giddy youth,
Relieve him of a weight that proves too much—
Now is the time,—or now, or never.
'Faith,
This kind of step is pitiful, not due
To Charles, this stealing back—hither, because
He 's from his capital! Oh Victor! Victor!
But thus it is. The age of crafty men
Is loathsome; youth contrives to carry off
Dissimulation; we may intersperse
Extenuating passages of strength,
Ardour, vivacity, and wit—may turn
E'en guile into a voluntary grace:

But one's old age, when graces drop away
And leave guile the pure staple of our lives—
Ah, loathsome!
Not so—or why pause I? Turin
Is mine to have, were I so minded, for
The asking; all the army 's mine—I 've witnessed
Each private fight beneath me; all the Court 's
Mine too; and, best of all, D'Ormea 's still
D'Ormea and mine. There 's some grace clinging yet.
Had I decided on this step, ere midnight
I 'd take the crown.
No. Just this step to rise
Exhausts me. Here am I arrived: the rest
Must be done for me. Would I could sit here
And let things right themselves, the masque unmasque
Of the old King, crownless, grey hair and hot blood,—
The young King, crowned, but calm before his time,
They say,—the eager mistress with her taunts,—
And the sad earnest wife who motions me
Away—ay, there she knelt to me! E'en yet
I can return and sleep at Chambery
A dream out.
Rather shake it off at Turin,
King Victor! Say: to Turin—yes, or no?
'T is this relentless noonday-lighted chamber,
Lighted like life but silent as the grave,

That disconcerts me. That 's the change must strike.
No silence last year! Some one flung doors wide
(Those two great doors which scrutinize me now)
And out I went 'mid crowds of men—men talking,
Men watching if my lip fell or brow knit,
Men saw me safe forth, put me on my road:
That makes the misery of this return.
Oh had a battle done it! Had I dropped,
Haling some battle, three entire days old,
Hither and thither by the forehead—dropped
In Spain, in Austria, best of all, in France—
Spurned on its horns or underneath its hooves,
When the spent monster went upon its knees
To pad and pash the prostrate wretch—I, Victor,
Sole to have stood up against France, beat down
By inches, brayed to pieces finally
In some vast unimaginable charge,
A flying hell of horse and foot and guns
Over me, and all 's lost, for ever lost,
There 's no more Victor when the world wakes up!
Then silence, as of a raw battle-field,
Throughout the world. Then after (as whole days
After, you catch at intervals faint noise
Through the stiff crust of frozen blood)—there creeps
A rumour forth, so faint, no noise at all,
That a strange old man, with face outworn for wounds

Is stumbling on from frontier town to town,
Begging a pittance that may help him find
His Turin out; what scorn and laughter follow
The coin you fling into his cap! And last,
Some bright morn, how men crowd about the midst
O' the market-place, where takes the old king breath
Ere with his crutch he strike the palace-gate
Wide ope!

To Turin, yes or no—or no?

Re-enter CHARLES *with papers.*

Charles. Just as I thought! A miserable falsehood
Of hirelings discontented with their pay
And longing for enfranchisement! A few
Testy expressions of old age that thinks
To keep alive its dignity o'er slaves
By means that suit their natures!
[*Tearing them.*] Thus they shake
My faith in Victor!

[*Turning, he discovers* VICTOR.

Victor [*after a pause*]. Not at Evian, Charles?
What 's this? Why do you run to close the doors?
No welcome for your father?

Charles [*aside*]. Not his voice!
What would I give for one imperious tone
Of the old sort! That 's gone for ever.

Victor. Must
I ask once more . . .
Charles. No—I concede it, sir!
You are returned for . . . true, your health declines;
True, Chambery 's a bleak unkindly spot;
You 'd choose one fitter for your final lodge—
Veneria, or Moncaglier—ay, that 's close
And I concede it.
Victor. I received advices
Of the conclusion of the Spanish matter,
Dated from Evian Baths . . .
Charles. And you forbore
To visit me at Evian, satisfied
The work I had to do would fully task
The little wit I have, and that your presence
Would only disconcert me—
Victor. Charles?
Charles. —Me, set
For ever in a foreign course to yours,
And . . .
Sir, this way of wile were good to catch,
But I have not the sleight of it. The truth!
Though I sink under it! What brings you here?
Victor. Not hope of this reception, certainly,
From one who 'd scarce assume a stranger mode
Of speech, did I return to bring about

Some awfulest calamity!

Charles. —You mean,
Did you require your crown again! Oh yes,
I should speak otherwise! But turn not that
To jesting! Sir, the truth! Your health declines?
Is aught deficient in your equipage?
Wisely you seek myself to make complaint,
And foil the malice of the world which laughs
At petty discontents; but I shall care
That not a soul knows of this visit. Speak!

Victor [*aside*]. Here is the grateful much-professing son
Prepared to worship me, for whose sole sake
I think to waive my plans of public good!
[*Aloud.*] Nay, Charles, if I did seek to take once more
My crown, were so disposed to plague myself,
What would be warrant for this bitterness?
I gave it—grant I would resume it—well?

Charles. I should say simply—leaving out the why
And how—you made me swear to keep that crown:
And as you then intended . . .

Victor. Fool! What way
Could I intend or not intend? As man,
With a man's will, when I say "I intend,"
I can intend up to a certain point,
No farther. I intended to preserve

The crown of Savoy and Sardinia whole:
And if events arise demonstrating
The way, I hoped should guard it, rather like
To lose it . . .

Charles. Keep within your sphere and mine!
It is God's province we usurp on, else.
Here, blindfold through the maze of things we walk
By a slight clue of false, true, right and wrong;
All else is rambling and presumption. I
Have sworn to keep this kingdom: there 's my truth.

Victor. Truth, boy, is here, within my breast; and in
Your recognition of it, truth is, too;
And in the effect of all this tortuous dealing
With falsehood, used to carry out the truth,
—In its success, this falsehood turns, again,
Truth for the world. But you are right: these themes
Are over-subtle. I should rather say
In such a case, frankly,—it fails, my scheme:
I hoped to see you bring about, yourself,
What I must bring about. I interpose
On your behalf—with my son's good in sight—
To hold what he is nearly letting go,
Confirm his title, add a grace perhaps.
There 's Sicily, for instance,—granted me
And taken back, some years since: till I give
That island with the rest, my work 's half done.

For his sake, therefore, as of those he rules . . .

Charles. Our sakes are one; and that, you could not say,

Because my answer would present itself
Forthwith:—a year has wrought an age's change.
This people 's not the people now, you once
Could benefit; nor is my policy
Your policy.

Victor [*with an outburst*]. I know it! You undo
All I have done—my life of toil and care!
I left you this the absolutest rule
In Europe: do you think I sit and smile,
Bid you throw power to the populace—
See my Sardinia, that has kept apart,
Join in the mad and democratic whirl
Whereto I see all Europe haste full tide?
England casts off her kings; France mimics England:
This realm I hoped was safe. Yet here I talk,
When I can save it, not by force alone,
But bidding plagues, which follow sons like you,
Fasten upon my disobedient . . .
[*Recollecting himself.*] Surely
I could say this—if minded so—my son?

Charles. You could not. Bitterer curses than your curse
Have I long since denounced upon myself

If I misused my power. In fear of these
I entered on those measures—will abide
By them: so, I should say, Count Tende . . .
Victor. No!
But no! But if, my Charles, your—more than old—
Half-foolish father urged these arguments,
And then confessed them futile, but said plainly
That he forgot his promise, found his strength
Fail him, had thought at savage Chambery
Too much of brilliant Turin, Rivoli here,
And Susa, and Veneria, and Superga—
Pined for the pleasant places he had built
When he was fortunate and young—
Charles. My father!
Victor. Stay yet!—and if he said he could not die
Deprived of baubles he had put aside,
He deemed, for ever—of the Crown that binds
Your brain up, whole, sound and impregnable,
Creating kingliness—the Sceptre too,
Whose mere wind, should you wave it, back would beat
Invaders—and the golden Ball which throbs
As if you grasped the palpitating heart
Indeed o' the realm, to mould as choose you may!
—If I must totter up and down the streets
My sires built, where myself have introduced
And fostered laws and letters, sciences,

The civil and the military arts!
Stay, Charles! I see you letting me pretend
To live my former self once more—King Victor,
The venturous yet politic: they style me
Again, the Father of the Prince: friends wink
Good-humouredly at the delusion you
So sedulously guard from all rough truths
That else would break upon my dotage!—You—
Whom now I see preventing my old shame—
I tell not, point by cruel point, my tale—
For is 't not in your breast my brow is hid?
Is not your hand extended? Say you not . . .

Enter D'ORMEA, *leading in* POLYXENA.

Polyxena [*advancing and withdrawing* CHARLES—*to* VICTOR].

In this conjuncture even, he would say
(Though with a moistened eye and quivering lip)
The suppliant is my father. I must save
A great man from himself, nor see him fling
His well-earned fame away: there must not follow
Ruin so utter, a break-down of worth
So absolute: no enemy shall learn,
He thrust his child 'twixt danger and himself,
And, when that child somehow stood danger out,
Stole back with serpent wiles to ruin Charles

—Body, that 's much,—and soul, that 's more—and realm,
That 's most of all! No enemy shall say . . .

D'Ormea. Do you repent, sir?

Victor [*resuming himself*]. D'Ormea? This is well!
Worthily done, King Charles, craftily done!
Judiciously you post these, to o'erhear
The little your importunate father thrusts
Himself on you to say!—Ah, they 'll correct
The amiable blind facility
You show in answering his peevish suit.
What can he need to sue for? Thanks, D'Ormea!
You have fulfilled your office: but for you,
The old Count might have drawn some few more livres
To swell his income! Had you, lady, missed
The moment, a permission might be granted
To buttress up my ruinous old pile!
But you remember properly the list
Of wise precautions I took when I gave
Nearly as much away—to reap the fruits
I should have looked for!

Charles. Thanks, sir: degrade me,
So you remain yourself! Adieu!

Victor. I 'll not
Forget it for the future, nor presume
Next time to slight such mediators! Nay—
Had I first moved them both to intercede,

I might secure a chamber in Moncaglier
—Who knows?

Charles. Adieu!

Victor. You bid me this adieu
With the old spirit?

Charles. Adieu!

Victor. Charles—Charles!

Charles. Adieu!

[VICTOR *goes.*

Charles. You were mistaken, Marquis, as you hear.
'T was for another purpose the Count came.
The Count desires Moncaglier. Give the order!

D'Ormea [*leisurely*]. Your minister has lost your confidence,
Asserting late, for his own purposes,
Count Tende would . . .

Charles [*flinging his badge back*]. Be still the minister!
And give a loose to your insulting joy;
It irks me more thus stifled than expressed:
Loose it!

D'Ormea. There 's none to loose, alas! I see
I never am to die a martyr.

Polyxena. Charles!

Charles. No praise, at least, Polyxena—no praise!

KING CHARLES.

Part II.

D'Ormea, *seated, folding papers he has been examining.*

This at the last effects it: now, King Charles
Or else King Victor—that 's a balance: but now,
D'Ormea the arch-culprit, either turn
O' the scale,—that 's sure enough. A point to solve,
My masters, moralists, whate'er your style!
When you discover why I push myself
Into a pitfall you 'd pass safely by,
Impart to me among the rest! No matter.
Prompt are the righteous ever with their rede
To us the wrongful; lesson them this once!
For safe among the wicked are you set,
D'Ormea! We lament life's brevity,
Yet quarter e'en the threescore years and ten,
Nor stick to call the quarter roundly "life."
D'Ormea was wicked, say, some twenty years;
A tree so long was stunted; afterward,
What if it grew, continued growing, till
No fellow of the forest equalled it?

'T was a stump then; a stump it still must be:
While forward saplings, at the outset checked,
In virtue of that first sprout keep their style
Amid the forest's green fraternity.
Thus I shoot up to surely get lopped down
And bound up for the burning. Now for it!

Enter CHARLES *and* POLYXENA *with* Attendants.

D'Ormea [*rises*]. Sir, in the due discharge of this my office—
This enforced summons of yourself from Turin,
And the disclosure I am bound to make
To-night,—there must already be, I feel,
So much that wounds . . .

Charles. Well, sir?

D'Ormea. —That I, perchance,
May utter also what, another time,
Would irk much,—it may prove less irksome now.

Charles. What would you utter?

D'Ormea. That I from my soul
Grieve at to-night's event: for you I grieve,
E'en grieve for . . .

Charles. Tush, another time for talk!
My kingdom is in imminent danger?

D'Ormea. Let
The Count communicate with France—its King,

His grandson, will have Fleury's aid for this,
Though for no other war.

Charles. First for the levies:
What forces can I muster presently?

[D'ORMEA *delivers papers which* CHARLES *inspects.*

Charles. Good—very good. Montorio . . . how is this?
—Equips me double the old complement
Of soldiers?

D'Ormea. Since his land has been relieved
From double imposts, this he manages:
But under the late monarch . . .

Charles. Peace! I know.
Count Spava has omitted mentioning
What proxy is to head these troops of his.

D'Ormea. Count Spava means to head his troops himself.
Something to fight for now; "Whereas," says he,
"Under the sovereign's father" . . .

Charles. It would seem
That all my people love me.

D'Ormea. Yes.

[*To* POLYXENA *while* CHARLES *continues to inspect the papers.*

A temper
Like Victor's may avail to keep a state:

He terrifies men and they fall not off;
Good to restrain: best, if restraint were all.
But, with the silent circle round him, ends
Such sway: our King's begins precisely there.
For to suggest, impel and set at work,
Is quite another function. Men may slight,
In time of peace, the King who brought them peace:
In war,—his voice, his eyes, help more than fear.
They love you, sir!

Charles [*to* Attendants]. Bring the regalia forth!
Quit the room! And now, Marquis, answer me!
Why should the King of France invade my realm?

D'Ormea. Why? Did I not acquaint your Majesty
An hour ago?

Charles. I choose to hear again
What then I heard.

D'Ormea. Because, sir, as I said,
Your father is resolved to have his crown
At any risk; and, as I judge, calls in
The foreigner to aid him.

Charles. And your reason
For saying this?

D'Ormea [*aside*]. Ay, just his father's way!
[*To* CHARLES.] The Count wrote yesterday to your forces'
Chief,
Rhebinder—made demand of help—

Charles. To try
Rhebinder—he 's of alien blood: aught else?
D'Ormea. Receiving a refusal,—some hours after,
The Count called on Del Borgo to deliver
The Act of Abdication: he refusing,
Or hesitating, rather—
Charles. What ensued?
D'Ormea. At midnight, only two hours since, at Turin,
He rode in person to the citadel
With one attendant, to Soccorso gate,
And bade the governor, San Remi, open—
Admit him.
Charles. For a purpose I divine.
These three were faithful, then?
D'Ormea. They told it me.
And I—
Charles. Most faithful—
D'Ormea. Tell it you—with this
Moreover of my own: if, an hour hence,
You have not interposed, the Count will be
O' the road to France for succour.
Charles. Very good!
You do your duty now to me your monarch
Fully, I warrant?—have, that is, your project
For saving both of us disgrace, no doubt?
D'Ormea. I give my counsel,—and the only one.

A month since, I besought you to employ
Restraints which had prevented many a pang:
But now the harsher course must be pursued.
These papers, made for the emergency,
Will pain you to subscribe: this is a list
Of those suspected merely—men to watch;
This—of the few of the Count's very household
You must, however reluctantly, arrest;
While here 's a method of remonstrance—sure
Not stronger than the case demands—to take
With the Count's self.

Charles. Deliver those three papers.

Polyxena [*while* CHARLES *inspects them—to* D'ORMEA].
Your measures are not over-harsh, sir: France
Will hardly be deterred from her intents
By these.

D'Ormea. If who proposes might dispose,
I could soon satisfy you. Even these,
Hear what he 'll say at my presenting!

Charles [*who has signed them*]. There!
About the warrants! You 've my signature.
What turns you pale? I do my duty by you
In acting boldly thus on your advice.

D'Ormea [*reading them separately*]. Arrest the people
I suspected merely?

Charles. Did you suspect them?

D'Ormea. Doubtless: but—but—sir,
This Forquieri 's governor of Turin,
And Rivarol and he have influence over
Half of the capital! Rabella, too?
Why, sir—

Charles. Oh, leave the fear to me!

D'Ormea [*still reading*]. You bid me
Incarcerate the people on this list?
Sir—

Charles. But you never bade arrest those men,
So close related to my father too,
On trifling grounds?

D'Ormea. Oh, as for that, St. George,
President of Chambery's senators,
Is hatching treason! still—
[*More troubled.*] Sir, Count Cumiane
Is brother to your father's wife! What 's here?
Arrest the wife herself?

Charles. You seem to think
A venial crime this plot against me. Well?

D'Ormea [*who has read the last paper*]. Wherefore
am I thus ruined? Why not take
My life at once? This poor formality
Is, let me say, unworthy you! Prevent it
You, madam! I have served you, am prepared
For all disgraces: only, let disgrace

Be plain, be proper—proper for the world
To pass its judgment on 'twixt you and me!
Take back your warrant, I will none of it!
Charles. Here is a man to talk of fickleness!
He stakes his life upon my father's falsehood;
I bid him . . .
D'Ormea. Not you! Were he trebly false,
You do not bid me . . .
Charles. Is 't not written there?
I thought so: give—I 'll set it right.
D'Ormea. Is it there?
Oh yes, and plain—arrest him now—drag here
Your father! And were all six times as plain,
Do you suppose I trust it?
Charles. Just one word!
You bring him, taken in the act of flight,
Or else your life is forfeit.
D'Ormea. Ay, to Turin
I bring him, and to-morrow?
Charles. Here and now!
The whole thing is a lie, a hateful lie,
As I believed and as my father said.
I knew it from the first, but was compelled
To circumvent you; and the great D'Ormea,
That baffled Alberoni and tricked Coscia,
The miserable sower of such discord

'Twixt sire and son, is in the toils at last.
Oh I see! you arrive—this plan of yours,
Weak as it is, torments sufficiently
A sick old peevish man—wrings hasty speech,
An ill-considered threat from him; that 's noted;
Then out you ferret papers, his amusement
In lonely hours of lassitude—examine
The day-by-day report of your paid spies—
And back you come: all was not ripe, you find,
And, as you hope, may keep from ripening yet,
But you were in bare time! Only, 't were best
I never saw my father—these old men
Are potent in excuses: and meanwhile,
D'Ormea 's the man I cannot do without!

Polyxena. Charles—

Charles. Ah, no question! You against me too!
You 'd have me eat and drink and sleep, live, die
With this lie coiled about me, choking me!
No, no, D'Ormea! You venture life, you say,
Upon my father's perfidy: and I
Have, on the whole, no right to disregard
The chains of testimony you thus wind
About me; though I do—do from my soul
Discredit them: still I must authorize
These measures, and I will. Perugia!

[*Many* Officers *enter.*] Count—

You and Solar, with all the force you have,
Stand at the Marquis' orders: what he bids,
Implicitly perform! You are to bring
A traitor here; the man that 's likest one
At present, fronts me; you are at his beck
For a full hour! he undertakes to show
A fouler than himself,—but, failing that,
Return with him, and, as my father lives,
He dies this night! The clemency you blame
So oft, shall be revoked—rights exercised,
Too long abjured.

[*To* D'Ormea.] Now sir, about the work!
To save your king and country! Take the warrant!

D'Ormea. You hear the sovereign's mandate, Count Perugia?
Obey me! As your diligence, expect
Reward! All follow to Moncaglier!

Charles [*in great anguish*]. D'Ormea! [D'Ormea *goes.*
He goes, lit up with that appalling smile!
[*To* Polyxena, *after a pause.*
At least you understand all this?

Polyxena. These means
Of our defence—these measures of precaution?

Charles. It must be the best way; I should have else
Withered beneath his scorn.

Polyxena. What would you say?

Charles. Why, do you think I mean to keep the crown,
Polyxena?

Polyxena. You then believe the story
In spite of all—that Victor comes?

Charles. Believe it?
I know that he is coming—feel the strength
That has upheld me leave me at his coming!
'T was mine, and now he takes his own again.
Some kinds of strength are well enough to have;
But who 's to have that strength? Let my crown go!
I meant to keep it; but I cannot—cannot!
Only, he shall not taunt me—he, the first . .
See if he would not be the first to taunt me
With having left his kingdom at a word.
With letting it be conquered without stroke,
With . . . no—no—'t is no worse than when he left!
I 've just to bid him take it, and, that over,
We 'll fly away—fly, for I loathe this Turin,
This Rivoli, all titles loathe, all state.
We 'd best go to your country—unless God
Send I die now!

Polyxena. Charles, hear me!

Charles. And again
Shall you be my Polyxena—you 'll take me
Out of this woe! Yes, do speak, and keep speaking!
I would not let you speak just now, for fear

You 'd counsel me against him: but talk, now,
As we two used to talk in blessed times:
Bid me endure all his caprices; take me
From this mad post above him!

Polyxena. I believe
We are undone, but from a different cause.
All your resources, down to the least guard,
Are at D'Ormea's beck. What if, the while,
He act in concert with your father? We
Indeed were lost. This lonely Rivoli—
Where find a better place for them?

Charles [*pacing the room*]. And why
Does Victor come? To undo all that 's done,
Restore the past, prevent the future! Seat
His mistress in your seat, and place in mine
. . . Oh, my own people, whom will you find there,
To ask of, to consult with, to care for,
To hold up with your hands? Whom? One that's false—
False—from the head's crown to the foot's sole, false!
The best is, that I knew it in my heart
From the beginning, and expected this,
And hated you, Polyxena, because
You saw thro' him, though I too saw thro' him,
Saw that he meant this while he crowned me, while
He prayed for me,—nay, while he kissed my brow,
I saw——

Polyxena. But if your measures take effect,
D'Ormea true to you?
Charles. Then worst of all!
I shall have loosed that callous wretch on him!
Well may the woman taunt him with his child—
I, eating here his bread, clothed in his clothes,
Seated upon his seat, let slip D'Ormea
To outrage him! We talk—perchance he tears
My father from his bed; the old hands feel
For one who is not, but who should be there,
He finds D'Ormea! D'Ormea too finds him!
The crowded chamber when the lights go out—
Closed doors—the horrid scuffle in the dark—
The accursed prompting of the minute! My guards!
To horse—and after, with me—and prevent!
Polyxena [*seizing his hand*]. King Charles! Pause
here upon this strip of time
Allotted you out of eternity!
Crowns are from God: you in his name hold yours.
Your life 's no least thing, were it fit your life
Should be abjured along with rule; but now,
Keep both! Your duty is to live and rule—
You, who would vulgarly look fine enough
In the world's eye, deserting your soul's charge,—
Ay, you would have men's praise, this Rivoli
Would be illumined! While, as 't is, no doubt,

Something of stain will ever rest on you;
No one will rightly know why you refused
To abdicate; they 'll talk of deeds you could
Have done, no doubt,—nor do I much expect
Future achievement will blot out the past,
Envelope it in haze—nor shall we two
Live happy any more. 'T will be, I feel,
Only in moments that the duty 's seen
As palpably as now: the months, the years
Of painful indistinctness are to come,
While daily must we tread these palace-rooms
Pregnant with memories of the past: your eye
May turn to mine and find no comfort there,
Through fancies that beset me, as yourself,
Of other courses, with far other issues,
We might have taken this great night: such bear,
As I will bear! What matters happiness?
Duty! There 's man's one moment: this is yours!

[*Putting the crown on his head, and the sceptre in his hand, she places him on his seat: a long pause and silence.*

Enter D'ORMEA *and* VICTOR, *with* Guards.

Victor. At last I speak; but once—that once, to you!
'T is you I ask, not these your varletry,
Who 's King of us?

Charles [*from his seat.*] Count Tende . . .

Victor. What your spies
Assert I ponder in my soul, I say—
Here to your face, amid your guards! I choose
To take again the crown whose shadow I gave—
For still its potency surrounds the weak
White locks their felon hands have discomposed.
Or I 'll not ask who 's King, but simply, who
Withholds the crown I claim? Deliver it!
I have no friend in the wide world: nor France
Nor England cares for me: you see the sum
Of what I can avail. Deliver it!

Charles. Take it, my father!
And now say in turn,
Was it done well, my father—sure not well,
To try me thus! I might have seen much cause
For keeping it—too easily seen cause!
But, from that moment, e'en more woefully
My life had pined away, than pine it will.
Already you have much to answer for.
My life to pine is nothing,—her sunk eyes
Were happy once! No doubt, my people think
I am their King still . . . but I cannot strive!
Take it!

Victor [*one hand on the crown* CHARLES *offers, the other on his neck*]. So few years give it quietly,

My son! It will drop from me. See you not?
A crown 's unlike a sword to give away—
That, let a strong hand to a weak hand give!
But crowns should slip from palsied brows to heads
Young as this head: yet mine is weak enough,
E'en weaker than I knew. I seek for phrases
To vindicate my right. 'T is of a piece!
All is alike gone by with me—who beat
Once D'Orleans in his lines—his very lines!
To have been Eugene's comrade, Louis's rival,
And now . . .

Charles [*putting the crown on him, to the rest*]. The King speaks, yet none kneels, I think!

Victor. I am then King! As I became a King
Despite the nations, kept myself a King,
So I die King, with Kingship dying too
Around me. I have lasted Europe's time.
What wants my story of completion? Where
Must needs the damning break show? Who mistrusts
My children here—tell they of any break
'Twixt my day's sunrise and its fiery fall?
And who were by me when I died but they?
D'Ormea there!

Charles. What means he?

Victor. Ever there!
Charles—how to save your story! Mine must go.

Say—say that you refused the crown to me!
Charles, yours shall be my story! You immured
Me, say, at Rivoli. A single year
I spend without a sight of you, then die.
That will serve every purpose—tell that tale
The world!

Charles. Mistrust me? Help!

Victor. Past help, past reach!
'T is in the heart—you cannot reach the heart:
This broke mine, that I did believe, you, Charles,
Would have denied me and disgraced me.

Polyxena. Charles
Has never ceased to be your subject, sir!
He reigned at first through setting up yourself
As pattern: if he e'er seemed harsh to you,
'T was from a too intense appreciation
Of your own character: he acted you—
Ne'er for an instant did I think it real,
Nor look for any other than this end.
I hold him worlds the worse on that account;
But so it was.

Charles [*to* POLYXENA]. I love you now indeed.
[*To* VICTOR.] You never knew me.

Victor. Hardly till this moment,
When I seem learning many other things
Because the time for using them is past.

If 't were to do again! That 's idly wished.
Truthfulness might prove policy as good
As guile. Is this my daughter's forehead? Yes:
I 've made it fitter now to be a queen's
Than formerly: I 've ploughed the deep lines there
Which keep too well a crown from slipping off.
No matter. Guile has made me King again.
Louis—'t was in King Victor's time:— long since,
When Louis reigned and, also, Victor reigned.
How the world talks already of us two!
God of eclipse and each discoloured star,
Why do I linger then?
Ha! Where lurks he?
D'Ormea! Nearer to your King! Now stand!
[*Collecting his strength as* D'Ormea *approaches.*
You lied, D'Ormea! I do not repent. [*Dies.*

THE

RETURN OF THE DRUSES

A TRAGEDY

PERSONS.

The Grand-Master's Prefect.
The Patriarch's Nuncio.
The Republic's Admiral.
LOYS DE DREUX, *Knight-Novice.*
Initiated Druses—DJABAL, KHALIL, ANAEL, MAANI, KARSHOOK, RAGHIB, AYOOB, *and others.*
Uninitiated Druses.
Prefect's Guard. Nuncio's Attendants. Admiral's Force.

TIME, 14—

PLACE.—*An Islet of the Southern Sporades, colonized by Druses of Lebanon, and garrisoned by the Knights-Hospitallers of Rhodes.*

SCENE.—*A Hall in the Prefect's Palace.*

THE

RETURN OF THE DRUSES.

1843.

ACT I.

Enter stealthily KARSHOOK, RAGHIB, AYOOB *and other initiated* Druses, *each as he enters casting off a robe that conceals his distinctive black vest and white turban; then, as giving a loose to exultation,—*

Karshook. The moon is carried off in purple fire:
Day breaks at last! Break glory, with the day,
On Djabal's dread incarnate mystery
Now ready to resume its pristine shape
Of Hakeem, as the Khalif vanished erst
In what seemed death to uninstructed eyes,
On red Mokattam's verge—our Founder's flesh,
As he resumes our Founder's function!
Raghib. —Death
Sweep to the Christian Prefect that enslaved
So long us sad Druse exiles o'er the sea!

Ayoob. Most joy be thine, O Mother-mount! Thy brood
Returns to thee, no outcasts as we left,
But thus—but thus! Behind, our Prefect's corse;
Before, a presence like the morning—thine,
Absolute Djabal late,—God Hakeem now
That day breaks!

Karshook. Off then, with disguise at last!
As from our forms this hateful garb we strip,
Lose every tongue its glozing accent too,
Discard each limb the ignoble gesture! Cry,
'T is the Druse Nation, warders on our Mount
Of the world's secret, since the birth of time,
—No kindred slips, no offsets from thy stock,
No spawn of Christians are we, Prefect, we
Who rise . . .

Ayoob. Who shout . .

Raghib. Who seize, a first-fruits, ha—
Spoil of the spoiler! Brave!

[*They begin to tear down, and to dispute for, the decorations of the hall.*

Karshook. Hold!

Ayoob. —Mine, I say;
And mine shall it continue!

Karshook. Just this fringe!
Take anything beside! Lo, spire on spire,

Curl serpentwise wreathed columns to the top
O' the roof, and hide themselves mysteriously
Among the twinkling lights and darks that haunt
Yon cornice! Where the huge veil, they suspend
Before the Prefect's chamber of delight,
Floats wide, then falls again as if its slave,
The scented air, took heart now, and anon
Lost heart to buoy its breadths of gorgeousness
Above the gloom they droop in—all the porch
Is jewelled o'er with frostwork charactery;
And, see, yon eight-point cross of white flame, winking
Hoar-silvery like some fresh-broke marble stone:
Raze out the Rhodian cross there, so thou leav'st me
This single fringe!

Ayoob. Ha, wouldst thou, dog-fox? Help!
—Three hand-breadths of gold fringe, my son was set
To twist, the night he died!

Karshook. Nay, hear the knave!
And I could witness my one daughter borne,
A week since, to the Prefect's couch, yet fold
These arms, be mute, lest word of mine should mar
Our Master's work, delay the Prefect here
A day, prevent his sailing hence for Rhodes—
How know I else?—Hear me denied my right
By such a knave!

Raghib [*interposing*]. Each ravage for himself!

Booty enough! On, Druses! Be there found
Blood and a heap behind us; with us, Djabal
Turned Hakeem; and before us, Lebanon!
Yields the porch? Spare not! There his minions dragged
Thy daughter, Karshook, to the Prefect's couch!
Ayoob! Thy son, to soothe the Prefect's pride,
Bent o'er that task, the death-sweat on his brow,
Carving the spice-tree's heart in scroll-work there!
Onward in Djabal's name!

As the tumult is at height, enter KHALIL. *A pause and silence.*

Khalil. Was it for this,
Djabal hath summoned you? Deserve you thus
A portion in to-day's event? What, here—
When most behoves your feet fall soft, your eyes
Sink low, your tongues lie still,—at Djabal's side,
Close in his very hearing, who, perchance,
Assumes e'en now God Hakeem's dreaded shape,—
Dispute you for these gauds?

Ayoob. How say'st thou, Khalil?
Doubtless our Master prompts thee! Take the fringe,
Old Karshook! I supposed it was a day . . .

Khalil. For pillage?

Karshook. Hearken, Khalil! Never spoke
A boy so like a song-bird; we avouch thee
Prettiest of all our Master's instruments

Except thy bright twin-sister; thou and Anael
Challenge his prime regard: but we may crave
(Such nothings as we be) a portion too
Of Djabal's favour; in him we believed,
His bound ourselves, him moon by moon obeyed,
Kept silence till this daybreak—so, may claim
Reward: who grudges me my claim?
Ayoob. To-day
Is not as yesterday!
Raghib. Stand off!
Khalil. Rebel you?
Must I, the delegate of Djabal, draw
His wrath on you, the day of our Return?
Other Druses. Wrench from their grasp the fringe!
Hounds! must the earth
Vomit her plagues on us thro' thee?—and thee?
Plague me not, Khalil, for their fault!
Khalil. Oh, shame!
Thus breaks to-day on you, the mystic tribe
Who, flying the approach of Osman, bore
Our faith, a merest spark, from Syria's ridge
Its birthplace, hither! "Let the sea divide
"These hunters from their prey," you said; "and safe
"In this dim islet's virgin solitude
'Tend we our faith, the spark, till happier time
"Fan it to fire; till Hakeem rise again,

" According to his word that, in the flesh
" Which faded on Mokattam ages since,
" He, at our extreme need, would interpose,
" And, reinstating all in power and bliss,
" Lead us himself to Lebanon once more."
Was 't not thus you departed years ago,
Ere I was born?

Druses. 'T was even thus, years ago.

Khalil. And did you call—(according to old laws
Which bid us, lest the sacred grow profane,
Assimilate ourselves in outward rites
With strangers fortune makes our lords, and live
As Christian with the Christian, Jew with Jew,
Druse only with the Druses)—did you call
Or no, to stand 'twixt you and Osman's rage
(Mad to pursue e'en hither thro' the sea
The remnant of our tribe), a race self-vowed
To endless warfare with his hordes and him,
The White-cross Knights of the adjacent Isle?

Karshook. And why else rend we down, wrench up, rase out?
These Knights of Rhodes we thus solicited
For help, bestowed on us a fiercer pest
Than aught we fled—their Prefect; who began
His promised mere paternal governance
By a prompt massacre of all our Sheikhs

Able to thwart the Order in its scheme
Of crushing, with our nation's memory,
Each chance of our return, and taming us
Bondslaves to Rhodes for ever—all, he thinks
To end by this day's treason.

Khalil. Say I not?
You, fitted to the Order's purposes,
Your Sheikhs cut off, your rites, your garb proscribed,
Must yet receive one degradation more;
The Knights at last throw off the mask—transfer,
As tributary now and appanage,
This islet they are but protectors of,
To their own ever-craving liege, the Church,
Who licenses all crimes that pay her thus.
You, from their Prefect, were to be consigned
(Pursuant of I know not what vile pact)
To the Knights' Patriarch, ardent to outvie
His predecessor in all wickedness.
When suddenly rose Djabal in the midst,
Djabal, the man in semblance, but our God
Confessed by signs and portents. Ye saw fire
Bicker round Djabal, heard strange music flit
Bird-like about his brow?

Druses. We saw—we heard!
Djabal is Hakeem, the incarnate Dread,
The phantasm Khalif, King of Prodigies!

Khalil. And as he said has not our Khalif done,
And so disposed events (from land to land
Passing invisibly) that when, this morn,
The pact of villany complete, there comes
This Patriarch's Nuncio with this Master's Prefect
Their treason to consummate,—each will face
For a crouching handful, an uplifted nation:
For simulated Christians, confessed Druses:
And, for slaves past hope of the Mother-mount,
Freedmen returning there 'neath Venice' flag;
That Venice which, the Hospitallers' foe,
Grants us from Candia escort home at price
Of our relinquished isle, Rhodes counts her own—
Venice, whose promised argosies should stand
Toward harbour: is it now that you, and you,
And you, selected from the rest to bear
The burthen of the Khalif's secret, further
To-day's event, entitled by your wrongs,
And witness in the Prefect's hall his fate—
That you dare clutch these gauds? Ay, drop them!

Karshook. True,
Most true, all this; and yet, may one dare hint,
Thou art the youngest of us?—though employed
Abundantly as Djabal's confidant,
Transmitter of his mandates, even now.
Much less, whene'er beside him Anael graces

The cedar throne, his queen-bride, art thou like
To occupy its lowest step that day!
Now, Khalil, wert thou checked as thou aspirest,
Forbidden such or such an honour,—say,
Would silence serve so amply?
Khalil. Karshook thinks
I covet honours? Well, nor idly thinks.
Honours? I have demanded of them all
The greatest.
Karshook. I supposed so.
Khalil. Judge, yourselves!
Turn, thus: 't is in the alcove at the back
Of yonder columned porch, whose entrance now
The veil hides, that our Prefect holds his state,
Receives the Nuncio, when the one, from Rhodes,
The other lands from Syria; there they meet.
Now, I have sued with earnest prayers . . .
Karshook. For what
Shall the Bride's brother vainly sue?
Khalil. That mine—
Avenging in one blow a myriad wrongs
—Might be the hand to slay the Prefect there!
Djabal reserves that office for himself. [*A silence.*
Thus far, as youngest of you all, I speak
—Scarce more enlightened than yourselves; since, near
As I approach him, nearer as I trust

Soon to approach our Master, he reveals
Only the God's power, not the glory yet.
Therefore I reasoned with you: now, as servant
To Djabal, bearing his authority,
Hear me appoint your several posts! Till noon
None see him save myself and Anael: once
The deed achieved, our Khalif, casting off
The embodied Awe's tremendous mystery,
The weakness of the flesh disguise, resumes
His proper glory, ne'er to fade again.

Enter a Druse.

The Druse. Our Prefect lands from Rhodes! without a sign
That he suspects aught since he left our Isle;
Nor in his train a single guard beyond
The few he sailed with hence: so have we learned
From Loys.

Karshook. Loys? Is not Loys gone
For ever?

Ayoob. Loys, the Frank Knight, returned?

The Druse. Loys, the boy, stood on the leading prow
Conspicuous in his gay attire, and leapt
Into the surf the foremost. Since day-dawn
I kept watch to the Northward; take but note
Of my poor vigilance to Djabal!

Khalil. Peace!
Thou, Karshook, with thy company, receive
The Prefect as appointed: see, all keep
The wonted show of servitude: announce
His entry here by the accustomed peal
Of trumpets, then await the further pleasure
Of Djabal! (Loys back, whom Djabal sent
To Rhodes that we might spare the single Knight
Worth sparing!)

Enter a second Druse.

The Druse. I espied it first! Say, I
First spied the Nuncio's galley from the South!
Said'st thou a Crossed-keys' flag would flap the mast?
It nears apace! One galley and no more.
If Djabal chance to ask who spied the flag,
Forget not, I it was!

Khalil. Thou, Ayoob, bring
The Nuncio and his followers hither! Break
One rule prescribed, ye wither in your blood,
Die at your fault!

Enter a third Druse.

The Druse. I shall see home, see home!
—Shall banquet in the sombre groves again!
Hail to thee, Khalil! Venice looms afar;

The argosies of Venice, like a cloud,
Bear up from Candia in the distance!

Khalil. Joy!

Summon our people, Raghib! Bid all forth!
Tell them the long-kept secret, old and young!
Set free the captive, let the trampled raise
Their faces from the dust, because at length
The cycle is complete, God Hakeem's reign
Begins anew! Say, Venice for our guard,
Ere night we steer for Syria! Hear you, Druses?
Hear you this crowning witness to the claims
Of Djabal? Oh, I spoke of hope and fear,
Reward and punishment, because he bade
Who has the right; for me, what should I say
But, mar not those imperial lineaments,
No majesty of all that rapt regard
Vex by the least omission! Let him rise
Without a check from you!

Druses. Let Djabal rise!

Enter Loys.—*The* Druses *are silent.*

Loys. Who speaks of Djabal?—for I seek him, friends!
[*Aside.*] *Tu Dieu!* 'T is as our Isle broke out in song
For joy, its Prefect-incubus drops off
To-day, and I succeed him in his rule!
But no—they cannot dream of their good fortune!

[*Aloud.*] Peace to you, Druses! I have tidings for you
But first for Djabal: where 's your tall bewitcher,
With that small Arab thin-lipped silver-mouth?

Khalil [*aside to* KARSHOOK]. Loys, in truth! Yet Djabal cannot err!

Karshook [*to* KHALIL]. And who takes charge of Loys? That 's forgotten,
Despite thy wariness! Will Loys stand
And see his comrades slaughtered?

Loys [*aside*]. How they shrink
And whisper, with those rapid faces! What?
The sight of me in their oppressors' garb
Strikes terror to the simple tribe? God's shame
On those that bring our Order ill repute!
But all 's at end now; better days begin
For these mild mountaineers from over-sea:
The timidest shall have in me no Prefect
To cower at thus! [*Aloud.*] I asked for Djabal—

Karshook [*aside*]. Better
One lured him, ere he can suspect, inside
The corridor; 't were easy to despatch
A youngster. [*To* LOYS.] Djabal passed some minutes since
Thro' yonder porch, and . .

Khalil [*aside*]. Hold! What, him despatch?
The only Christian of them all we charge

No tyranny upon? Who,—noblest Knight
Of all that learned from time to time their trade
Of lust and cruelty among us,—heir
To Europe's pomp, a truest child of pride,—
Yet stood between the Prefect and ourselves
From the beginning? Loys, Djabal makes
Account of, and precisely sent to Rhodes
For safety? I take charge of him!

[*To* Loys.] Sir Loys,—

Loys. There, cousins! Does Sir Loys strike you dead?

Khalil [*advancing*]. Djabal has intercourse with few or none
Till noontide: but, your pleasure?

Loys. "Intercourse
"With few or none?"—(Ah, Khalil, when you spoke
I saw not your smooth face! All health!—and health
To Anael! How fares Anael?)—"Intercourse
"With few or none?" Forget you, I 've been friendly
With Djabal long ere you or any Druse?
—Enough of him at Rennes, I think, beneath
The Duke my father's roof! He 'd tell by the hour,
With fixed white eyes beneath his swarthy brow,
Plausiblest stories . . .

Khalil. Stories, say you?—Ah,
The quaint attire!

Loys. My dress for the last time!

How sad I cannot make you understand,
This ermine, o'er a shield, betokens me
Of Bretagne, ancientest of provinces
And noblest; and, what 's best and oldest there,
See, Dreux', our house's blazon, which the Nuncio
Tacks to an Hospitaller's vest to-day!

Khalil. The Nuncio we await? What brings you back
From Rhodes, Sir Loys?

Loys. How you island-tribe
Forget the world 's awake while here you drowse!
What brings me back? What should not bring me, rather!
Our Patriarch's Nuncio visits you to-day—
Is not my year's probation out? I come
To take the knightly vows.

Khalil. What 's that you wear?

Loys. This Rhodian cross? The cross your Prefect wore.
You should have seen, as I saw, the full Chapter
Rise, to a man, while they transferred this cross
From that unworthy Prefect's neck to . . . (fool—
My secret will escape me!) In a word,
My year's probation passed, a Knight ere eve
Am I; bound, like the rest, to yield my wealth
To the common stock, to live in chastity,
(We Knights espouse alone our Order's fame)

—Change this gay weed for the back white-crossed gown,
And fight to death against the Infidel
—Not, therefore, against you, you Christians with
Such partial difference only as befits
The peacefullest of tribes. But Khalil, prithee,
Is not the Isle brighter than wont to-day?

Khalil. Ah, the new sword!

Loys. See now! You handle sword
As 't were a camel-staff. Pull! That 's my motto,
Annealed "*Pro fide*," on the blade in blue.

Khalil. No curve in it? Surely a blade should curve.

Loys. Straight from the wrist! Loose—it should poise itself!

Khalil [*waving with irrepressible exultation the sword*].
We are a nation, Loys, of old fame
Among the mountains! Rights have we to keep
With the sword too!
[*Remembering himself.*] But I forget—you bid me
Seek Djabal?

Loys. What! A sword's sight scares you not?
(The People I will make of him and them!
Oh let my Prefect-sway begin at once!)
Bring Djabal—say, indeed, that come he must!

Khalil. At noon seek Djabal in the Prefect's Chamber,
And find . . . [*Aside.*] Nay, 't is thy cursed race's token,
Frank pride, no special insolence of thine!

[*Aloud.*] Tarry, and I will do your bidding, Loys!
[*To the rest aside.*] Now, forth you! I proceed to
Djabal straight.
Leave this poor boy, who knows not what he says!
Oh will it not add joy to even thy joy,
Djabal, that I report all friends were true?
[KHALIL *goes, followed by the* Druses.
Loys. Tu Dieu! How happy I shall make these
Druses!
Was 't not surpassingly contrived of me
To get the long list of their wrongs by heart,
Then take the first pretence for stealing off
From these poor islanders, present myself
Sudden at Rhodes before the noble Chapter,
And (as best proof of ardour in its cause
Which ere to-night will have become, too, mine)
Acquaint it with this plague-sore in its body,
This Prefect and his villanous career?
The princely Synod! All I dared request
Was his dismissal; and they graciously
Consigned his very office to myself—
Myself may cure the Isle diseased!
And well
For them, they did so! Since I never felt
How lone a lot, tho' brilliant, I embrace,
Till now that, past retrieval, it is mine.

To live thus, and thus die! Yet, as I leapt
On shore, so home a feeling greeted me
That I could half believe in Djabal's story,
He used to tempt my father with, at Rennes—
And me, too, since the story brought me here—
Of some Count Dreux and ancestor of ours
Who, sick of wandering from Bouillon's war,
Left his old name in Lebanon.
Long days
At least to spend in the Isle! and, my news known
An hour hence, what if Anael turn on me
The great black eyes I must forget?
Why, fool,
Recall them, then? My business is with Djabal,
Not Anael! Djabal tarries: if I seek him?—
The Isle is brighter than its wont to-day.

ACT II.

Enter DJABAL.

Djabal. That a strong man should think himself a God!
I—Hakeem? To have wandered through the world,
Sown falsehood, and thence reaped now scorn, now faith,
For my one chant with many a change, my tale
Of outrage, and my prayer for vengeance—this
Required, forsooth, no mere man's faculty,
Nought less than Hakeem's? The persuading Loys
To pass probation here; the getting access
By Loys to the Prefect; worst of all,
The gaining my tribe's confidence by fraud
That would disgrace the very Frank,—a few
Of Europe's secrets which subdue the flame,
The wave,—to ply a simple tribe with these,
Took Hakeem?
And I feel this first to-day!
Does the day break, is the hour imminent
When one deed, when my whole life's deed, my deed

Must be accomplished? Hakeem? Why the God?
Shout, rather, "Djabal, Youssof's child, thought slain
"With his whole race, the Druses' Sheikhs, this Prefect
"Endeavoured to extirpate—saved, a child,
"Returns from traversing the world, a man,
"Able to take revenge, lead back the march
"To Lebanon"—so shout, and who gainsays?
But now, because delusion mixed itself
Insensibly with this career, all 's changed!
Have I brought Venice to afford us convoy?
"True—but my jugglings wrought that!" Put I heart
Into our people where no heart lurked?—"Ah,
"What cannot an impostor do!"
Not this!
Not do this which I do! Not bid avaunt
Falsehood! Thou shalt not keep thy hold on me!
—Nor even get a hold on me! 'T is now—
This day—hour—minute—'t is as here I stand
On the accursed threshold of the Prefect,
That I am found deceiving and deceived!
And now what do I?—hasten to the few
Deceived, ere they deceive the many—shout,
"As I professed, I did believe myself!
"Say, Druses, had you seen a butchery —
"If Ayoob, Karshook saw——Maani there
"Must tell you how I saw my father sink;

"My mother's arms twine still about my neck;
"I hear my brother shriek, here 's yet the scar
"Of what was meant for my own death-blow—say,
"If you had woke like me, grown year by year
"Out of the tumult in a far-off clime,
"Would it be wondrous such delusion grew?
"I walked the world, asked help at every hand;
"Came help or no? Not this and this? Which helps
"When I returned with, found the Prefect here,
"The Druses here, all here but Hakeem's self,
"The Khalif of the thousand prophecies,
"Reserved for such a juncture,—could I call
"My mission aught but Hakeem's? Promised Hakeem
"More than performs the Djabal—you absolve?
"—Me, you will never shame before the crowd
"Yet happily ignorant?—Me, both throngs surround,
"The few deceived, the many unabused,
"—Who, thus surrounded, slay for you and them
"The Prefect, lead to Lebanon? No Khalif,
"But Sheikh once more! Mere Djabal—not" . . .

Enter KHALIL *hastily.*

Khalil. —God Hakeem!
'T is told! The whole Druse nation knows thee, Hakeem,
As we! and mothers lift on high their babes
Who seem aware, so glisten their great eyes,

Thou hast not failed us; ancient brows are proud;
Our elders could not earlier die, it seems,
Than at thy coming! The Druse heart is thine!
Take it! my lord and theirs, be thou adored!

Djabal [*aside*]. Adored!—but I renounce it utterly!

Khalil. Already are they instituting choirs
And dances to the Khalif, as of old
'T is chronicled thou bad'st them.

Djabal [*aside*]. I abjure it!
'T is not mine—not for me!

Khalil. Why pour they wine
Flavoured like honey and bruised mountain-herbs,
Or wear those strings of sun-dried cedar-fruit?
Oh, let me tell thee—Esaad, we supposed
Doting, is carried forth, eager to see
The last sun rise on the Isle: he can see now!
The shamed Druse women never wept before:
They can look up when we reach home, they say.
Smell!—sweet cane, saved in Lilith's breast thus long—
Sweet!—it grows wild in Lebanon. And I
Alone do nothing for thee! 'T is my office
Just to announce what well thou know'st—but thus
Thou bidst me. At this self-same moment tend
The Prefect, Nuncio and the Admiral
Hither by their three sea-paths: nor forget

Who were the trusty watchers! —thou forget?
Like me, who do forget that Anael bade . . .

Djabal [*aside*]. Ay, Anael, Anael—is that said at last?
Louder than all, that would be said, I knew!
What does abjuring mean, confessing mean,
To the people? Till that woman crossed my path,
On went I, solely for my people's sake:
I saw her, and I then first saw myself,
And slackened pace: "if I should prove indeed
"Hakeem—with Anael by!"

Khalil [*aside*]. Ah, he is rapt!
Dare I at such a moment break on him
Even to do my sister's bidding? Yes:
The eyes are Djabal's and not Hakeem's yet,
Though but till I have spoken this, perchance.

Djabal [*aside*]. To yearn to tell her, and yet have no one
Great heart's word that will tell her! I could gasp
Doubtless one such word out, and die.
[*Aloud.*] You said
That Anael . . .

Khalil. . . . Fain would see thee, speak with thee
Before thou change, discard this Djabal's shape
She knows, for Hakeem's shape she is to know.
Something to say that will not from her mind!
I know not what—"Let him but come!" she said.

Djabal [*half-apart*]. My nation—all my Druses—
how fare they?
Those I must save, and suffer thus to save,
Hold they their posts? Wait they their Khalif too?
Khalil. All at the signal pant to flock around
That banner of a brow!
Djabal [*aside*]. And when they flock,
Confess them this: and after, for reward,
Be chased with howlings to her feet perchance!
—Have the poor outraged Druses, deaf and blind,
Precede me there, forestall my story there,
Tell it in mocks and jeers!
I lose myself.
Who needs a Hakeem to direct him now?
I need the veriest child—why not this child?
[*Turning abruptly to* KHALIL.
You are a Druse too, Khalil; you were nourished
Like Anael with our mysteries: if she
Could vow, so nourished, to love only one
Who should avenge the Druses, whence proceeds
Your silence? Wherefore made you no essay,
Who thus implicitly can execute
My bidding? What have I done, you could not?
Who, knowing more than Anael the prostration
Of our once lofty tribe, the daily life
Of this detested . . .

Does he come, you say,
This Prefect? All 's in readiness?
Khalil. The sword,
The sacred robe, the Khalif's mystic tiar,
Laid up so long, are all disposed beside
The Prefect's chamber.
Djabal. —Why did you despair?
Khalil. I know our nation's state? Too surely know,
As thou who speak'st to prove me! Wrongs like ours
Should wake revenge: but when I sought the wronged
And spoke,—"The Prefect stabbed your son—arise!
"Your daughter, while you starve, eats shameless bread
"In his pavilion—then arise!"—my speech
Fell idly: 't was, "Be silent, or worse fare!
"Endure till time's slow cycle prove complete!
"Who mayst thou be that takest on thee to thrust
"Into this peril—art thou Hakeem?" No!
Only a mission like thy mission renders
All these obedient at a breath, subdues
Their private passions, brings their wills to one.
Djabal. You think so?
Khalil. Even now—when they have witnessed
Thy miracles—had I not threatened all
With Hakeem's vengeance, they would mar the work,
And couch ere this, each with his special prize,
Safe in his dwelling, leaving our main hope

To perish. No! When these have kissed thy feet
At Lebanon, the past purged off, the present
Clear,—for the future, even Hakeem's mission
May end, and I perchance, or any youth,
Shall rule them thus renewed.—I tutor thee!

Djabal. And wisely. (He is Anael's brother, pure
As Anael's self.) Go say, I come to her.
Haste! I will follow you. [KHALIL *goes.*

Oh, not confess
To these, the blinded multitude—confess,
Before at least the fortune of my deed
Half-authorize its means! Only to her
Let me confess my fault, who in my path
Curled up like incense from a Mage-king's tomb
When he would have the wayfarer descend
Through the earth's rift and bear hid treasure forth!
How should child's-carelessness prove manhood's crime
Till now that I, whose lone youth hurried past,
Letting each joy 'scape for the Druses' sake,
At length recover in one Druse all joy?
Were her brow brighter, her eyes richer, still
Would I confess. On the gulf's verge I pause.
How could I slay the Prefect, thus and thus?
Anael, be mine to guard me, not destroy! [*Goes.*

Enter ANAEL, *and* MAANI *who is assisting to array her in the ancient dress of the Druses.*

Anael. Those saffron vestures of the tabret-girls!
Comes Djabal, think you?

Maani. Doubtless Djabal comes.

Anael. Dost thou snow-swathe thee kinglier, Lebanon,
Than in my dreams?—Nay all the tresses off
My forehead! Look I lovely so? He says
That I am lovely.

Maani. Lovely: nay, that hangs
Awry.

Anael. You tell me how a khandjar hangs?
The sharp side, thus, along the heart, see, marks
The maiden of our class. Are you content
For Djabal as for me?

Maani. Content, my child.

Anael. Oh mother, tell me more of him! He comes
Even now—tell more, fill up my soul with him!

Maani. And did I not . . . yes, surely . . . tell you all?

Anael. What will be changed in Djabal when the Change
Arrives? Which feature? Not his eyes!

Maani. 'T is writ
Our Hakeem's eyes rolled fire and clove the dark
Superbly.

Anael. Not his eyes! His voice perhaps?
Yet that 's no change; for a grave current live!
—Grandly beneath the surface ever lived,
That, scattering, broke as in live silver spray
While . . ah, the bliss . . he would discourse to me
In that enforced still fashion, word on word!
'T is the old current which must swell thro' that,
For what least tone, Maani, could I lose?
'T is surely not his voice will change!
—If Hakeem
Only stood by! If Djabal, somehow, passed
Out of the radiance as from out a robe;
Possessed, but was not it!
He lived with you?
Well—and that morning Djabal saw me first
And heard me vow never to wed but one
Who saved my People—on that day . . . proceed!

Maani. Once more, then: from the time of his return
In secret, changed so since he left the Isle
That I, who screened our Emir's last of sons,
This Djabal, from the Prefect's massacre
—Who bade him ne'er forget the child he was,
—Who dreamed so long the youth he might become—
I knew not in the man that child; the man
Who spoke alone of hope to save our tribe,

How he had gone from land to land to save
Our tribe—allies were sure, nor foes to dread.
And much he mused, days, nights, alone he mused:
But never till that day when, pale and worn
As by a persevering woe, he cried
"Is there not one Druse left me?"—and I showed
The way to Khalil's and your hiding-place
From the abhorred eye of the Prefect here,
So that he saw you, heard you speak—till then,
Never did he announce—(how the moon seemed
To ope and shut, the while, above us both!)
—His mission was the mission promised us;
The cycle had revolved; all things renewing,
He was lost Hakeem clothed in flesh to lead
His children home anon, now veiled to work
Great purposes: the Druses now would change!

Anael. And they have changed! And obstacles did sink,
And furtherances rose! And round his form
Played fire, and music beat her angel wings!
My people, let me more rejoice, oh more
For you than for myself! Did I but watch
Afar the pageant, feel our Khalif pass,
One of the throng, how proud were I—tho' ne'er
Singled by Djabal's glance! But to be chosen
His own from all, the most his own of all,

To be exalted with him, side by side,
Lead the exulting Druses, meet . . . ah, how
Worthily meet the maidens who await
Ever beneath the cedars—how deserve
This honour, in their eyes? So bright are they
Who saffron-vested sound the tabret there,
The girls who throng there in my dream! One hour
And all is over: how shall I do aught
That may deserve next hour's exalting?—How?—
[*Suddenly to* MAANI.
Mother, I am not worthy him! I read it
Still in his eyes! He stands as if to tell me
I am not, yet forbears. Why else revert
To one theme ever?—how mere human gifts
Suffice him in myself—whose worship fades,
Whose awe goes ever off at his approach,
As now, who when he comes . . .
[DJABAL *enters.*] Oh why is it
I cannot kneel to you?

Djabal. Rather, 't is I
Should kneel to you, my Anael!

Anael. Even so!
For never seem you—shall I speak the truth?—
Never a God to me! 'T is the Man's hand,
Eye, voice! Oh do you veil these to our people,
Or but to me? To them, I think, to them!

And brightness is their veil, shadow—my truth!
You mean that I should never kneel to you
—So, thus I kneel!

Djabal [*preventing her*]. No—no!
[*Feeling the khandjar as he raises her.*
Ha, have you chosen . . .

Anael. The khandjar with our ancient garb. But, Djabal,
Change not, be not exalted yet! Give time
That I may plan more, perfect more! My blood
Beats, beats!
[*Aside.*] Oh must I then—since Loys leaves us
Never to come again, renew in me
These doubts so near effaced already—must
I needs confess them now to Djabal?—own
That when I saw that stranger, heard his voice,
My faith fell, and the woeful thought flashed first
That each effect of Djabal's presence, taken
For proof of more than human attributes
In him, by me whose heart at his approach
Beat fast, whose brain while he was by swam round,
Whose soul at his departure died away,
—That every such effect might have been wrought
In other frames, tho' not in mine, by Loys
Or any merely mortal presence? Doubt
Is fading fast; shall I reveal it now?

How shall I meet the rapture presently,
With doubt unexpiated, undisclosed?

Djabal [*aside*]. Avow the truth? I cannot! In what words
Avow that all she loved in me was false?
—Which yet has served that flower-like love of hers
To climb by, like the clinging gourd, and clasp
With its divinest wealth of leaf and bloom.
Could I take down the prop-work, in itself
So vile, yet interlaced and overlaid
With painted cups and fruitage—might these still
Bask in the sun, unconscious their own strength
Of matted stalk and tendril had replaced
The old support thus silently withdrawn!
But no; the beauteous fabric crushes too.
'T is not for my sake but for Anael's sake
I leave her soul this Hakeem where it leans.
Oh could I vanish from her, quit the Isle!
And yet—a thought comes: here my work is done
At every point; the Druses must return—
Have convoy to their birth-place back, whoe'er
The leader be, myself or any Druse—
Venice is pledged to that: 't is for myself,
For my own vengeance in the Prefect's death,
I stay now, not for them: to slay or spare
The Prefect, whom imports it save myself?

He cannot bar their passage from the Isle;
What would his death be but my own reward?
Then, mine I will forego. It is foregone!
Let him escape with all my House's blood!
Ere he can reach land, Djabal disappears,
And Hakeem, Anael loved, shall, fresh as first,
Live in her memory, keeping her sublime
Above the world. She cannot touch that world
By ever knowing what I truly am,
Since Loys,—of mankind the only one
Able to link my present with my past,
My life in Europe with my Island life,
Thence, able to unmask me,—I 've disposed
Safely at last at Rhodes, and . . .

Enter KHALIL.

Khalil. Loys greets thee!

Djabal. Loys? To drag me back? It cannot be!

Anael [*aside*]. Loys! Ah, doubt may not be stifled so!

Khalil. Can I have erred that thou so gazest? Yes,
I told thee not in the glad press of tidings
Of higher import, Loys is returned
Before the Prefect, with, if possible,
Twice the light-heartedness of old. As though
On some inauguration he expects,
To-day, the world's fate hung!

Djabal. —And asks for me?

Khalil. Thou knowest all things. Thee in chief he greets,
But every Druse of us is to be happy
At his arrival, he declares: were Loys
Thou, Master, he could have no wider soul
To take us in with. How I love that Loys!

Djabal [*aside*]. Shame winds me with her tether round and round.

Anael [*aside*]. Loys? I take the trial! it is meet,
The little I can do, be done; that faith,
All I can offer, want no perfecting
Which my own act may compass. Ay, this way
All may go well, nor that ignoble doubt
Be chased by other aid than mine. Advance
Close to my fear, weigh Loys with my Lord,
The mortal with the more than mortal gifts!

Djabal [*aside*]. Before, there were so few deceived! and now
There 's doubtless not one least Druse in the Isle
But, having learned my superhuman claims,
And calling me his Khalif-God, will clash
The whole truth out from Loys at first word!
While Loys, for his part, will hold me up,
With a Frank's unimaginable scorn
Of such imposture, to my people's eyes!

Could I but keep him longer yet awhile
From them, amuse him here until I plan
How he and I at once may leave the Isle!
Khalil I cannot part with from my side—
My only help in this emergency:
There 's Anael!

Anael. Please you?

Djabal. Anael—none but she!
[*To* ANAEL.] I pass some minutes in the chamber there,
Ere I see Loys: you shall speak with him
Until I join you. Khalil follows me.

Anael [*aside*]. As I divined: he bids me save myself
Offers me a probation—I accept.
Let me see Loys!

Loys [*without*]. Djabal!

Anael [*aside*]. 'T is his voice.
The smooth Frank trifler with our people's wrongs,
The self-complacent boy-inquirer, loud
On this and that inflicted tyranny,
—Aught serving to parade an ignorance
Of how wrong feels, inflicted! Let me close
With what I viewed at distance: let myself
Probe this delusion to the core!

Djabal. He comes.
Khalil, along with me! while Anael waits
Till I return once more – and but once more.

ACT III.

ANAEL *and* LOYS.

Anael. Here leave me! Here I wait another. 'T was
For no mad protestation of a love
Like this you say possesses you, I came.

Loys. Love? how protest a love I dare not feel?
Mad words may doubtless have escaped me: you
Are here—I only feel you here!

Anael. No more!

Loys. But once again, whom could you love? I dare,
Alas, say nothing of myself, who am
A Knight now, for when Knighthood we embrace,
Love we abjure: so, speak on safely: speak,
Lest I speak, and betray my faith! And yet
To say your breathing passes through me, changes
My blood to spirit, and my spirit to you,
As Heaven the sacrificer's wine to it—
This is not to protest my love! You said
You could love one . . .

Anael. One only! We are bent

To earth—who raises up my tribe, I love;
The Prefect bows us—who removes him; we
Have ancient rights—who gives them back to us,
I love. Forbear me! Let my hand go!
Loys. Him
You could love only? Where is Djabal? Stay!
[*Aside.*] Yet wherefore stay? Who does this but myself?
Had I apprised her that I come to do
Just this, what more could she acknowledge? No,
She sees into my heart's core! What is it
Feeds either cheek with red, as June some rose?
Why turns she from me? Ah fool, over-fond
To dream I could call up . . .
. . . What never dream
Yet feigned! 'T is love! Oh Anael speak to me!
Djabal—
Anael. Seek Djabal by the Prefect's chamber
At noon! [*She paces the room.*
Loys [*aside*]. And am I not the Prefect now?
Is it my fate to be the only one
Able to win her love, the only one
Unable to accept her love? The past
Breaks up beneath my footing: came I here
This morn as to a slave, to set her free
And take her thanks, and then spend day by day
Content beside her in the Isle? What works

This knowledge in me now? Her eye has broken
The faint disguise away: for Anael's sake
I left the Isle, for her espoused the cause
Of the Druses, all for her I thought, till now,
To live without!

—As I must live! To-day
Ordains me Knight, forbids me . . . never shall
Forbid me to profess myself, heart, arm,
Thy soldier!

Anael. Djabal you demanded, comes.

Loys [*aside*]. What wouldst thou, Loys? See him?
Nought beside
Is wanting: I have felt his voice a spell
From first to last. He brought me here, made known
The Druses to me, drove me hence to seek
Redress for them; and shall I meet him now,
When nought is wanting but a word of his,
To—what?—induce me to spurn hope, faith, pride,
Honour away,—to cast my lot among
His tribe, become a proverb in men's mouths,
Breaking my high pact of companionship
With those who graciously bestowed on me
The very opportunities I turn
Against them! Let me not see Djabal now!

Anael. The Prefect also comes.

Loys [*aside*]. Him let me see,

Not Djabal! Him, degraded at a word,
To soothe me,—to attest belief in me—
And after, Djabal! Yes, ere I return
To her, the Nuncio's vow shall have destroyed
This heart's rebellion, and coerced this will
For ever.

Anael, not before the vows
Irrevocably fix me . . .

Let me fly!
The Prefect, or I lose myself for ever! [*Goes.*

Anael. Yes, I am calm now; just one way remains—
One, to attest my faith in him: for, see,
I were quite lost else: Loys, Djabal, stand
On either side—two men! I balance looks
And words, give Djabal a man's preference,
No more. In Djabal, Hakeem is absorbed.
And for a love like this, the God who saves
My race, selects me for his bride? One way!

Enter DJABAL.

Djabal [*to himself*]. No moment is to waste then: 't is resolved.
If Khalil may be trusted to lead back
My Druses, and if Loys can be lured
Out of the Isle—if I procure his silence,
Or promise never to return at least,—

All 's over. Even now my bark awaits:
I reach the next wild islet and the next,
And lose myself beneath the sun for ever.
And now, to Anael!

Anael. Djabal, I am thine!

Djabal. Mine? Djabal's?—As if Hakeem had not been?

Anael. Not Djabal's? Say first, do you read my thought?
Why need I speak, if you can read my thought?

Djabal. I do not, I have said a thousand times.

Anael. (My secret 's safe, I shall surprise him yet!)
Djabal, I knew your secret from the first:
Djabal, when first I saw you . . . (by our porch
You leant, and pressed the tinkling veil away,
And one fringe fell behind your neck—I see!)
. . . I knew you were not human, for I said
"This dim secluded house where the sea beats
"Is heaven to me—my people's huts are hell
"To them; this august form will follow me,
"Mix with the waves his voice will,—I have him;
"And they, the Prefect! Oh, my happiness
"Rounds to the full whether I choose or no!
"His eyes met mine, he was about to speak,
"His hand grew damp—surely he meant to say
"He let me love him: in that moment's bliss

"I shall forget my people pine for home—
"They pass and they repass with pallid eyes!"
I vowed at once a certain vow; this vow—
Not to embrace you till my tribe was saved.
Embrace me!

Djabal [*apart*]. And she loved me! Nought remained
But that! Nay, Anael, is the Prefect dead?

Anael. Ah, you reproach me! True, his death crowns all,
I know—or should know: and I would do much,
Believe! but, death! Oh, you, who have known death,
Would never doom the Prefect, were death fearful
As we report!
Death!—a fire curls within us
From the foot's palm, and fills up to the brain,
Up, out, then shatters the whole bubble-shell
Of flesh, perchance!
Death!—witness, I would die,
Whate'er death be, would venture now to die
For Khalil, for Maani—what for thee?
Nay but embrace me, Djabal, in assurance
My vow will not be broken, for I must
Do something to attest my faith in you,
Be worthy you!

Djabal [*avoiding her*]. I come for that—to say

Such an occasion is at hand: 't is like
I leave you—that we part, my Anael,—part
For ever!

Anael. We part? Just so! I have succumbed,—
I am, he thinks, unworthy—and nought less
Will serve than such approval of my faith.
Then, we part not! Remains there no way short
Of that? Oh not that!
Death!—yet a hurt bird
Died in my hands; its eyes filmed—"Nay, it sleeps,"
I said, "will wake to-morrow well:" 't was dead.

Djabal. I stand here and time fleets. Anael—I come
To bid a last farewell to you: perhaps
We never meet again. But, ere the Prefect
Arrive . . .

Enter KHALIL, *breathlessly.*

Khalil. He 's here! The Prefect! Twenty guards,
No more: no sign he dreams of danger. All
Awaits thee only. Ayoob, Karshook, keep
Their posts—wait but the deed's accomplishment
To join us with thy Druses to a man.
Still holds his course the Nuncio—near and near
The fleet from Candia steering.

Djabal [*aside*]. All is lost!
—Or won?

Khalil. And I have laid the sacred robe,
The sword, the head-tiar, at the porch—the place
Commanded. Thou wilt hear the Prefect's trumpet.
Djabal. Then I keep Anael,—him then, past recall,
I slay—'t is forced on me. As I began
I must conclude—so be it!
Khalil. For the rest,
Save Loys, our foe's solitary sword,
All is so safe that . . . I will ne'er entreat
Thy post again of thee: tho' danger none,
There must be glory only meet for thee
In slaying the Prefect.
Anael [*aside*]. And 't is now that Djabal
Would leave me!—in the glory meet for him!
Djabal. As glory, I would yield the deed to you
Or any Druse; what peril there may be,
I keep. [*Aside.*] All things conspire to hound me on.
Not now, my soul, draw back, at least! Not now!
The course is plain, howe'er obscure all else.
Once offer this tremendous sacrifice,
Prevent what else will be irreparable,
Secure these transcendental helps, regain
The Cedars—then let all dark clear itself!
I slay him!
Khalil. Anael, and no part for us!
[*To* DJABAL.] Hast thou possessed her with . . .

Djabal [*to* ANAEL]. Whom speak you to?
What is it you behold there? Nay, this smile
Turns stranger. Shudder you? The man must die,
As thousands of our race have died thro' him.
One blow, and I discharge his weary soul
From the flesh that pollutes it! Let him fill
Straight some new expiatory form, of earth
Or sea, the reptile or some aëry thing:
What is there in his death?

Anael. My brother said,
Is there no part in it for us?

Djabal. For Khalil,—
The trumpet will announce the Nuncio's entry;
Here, I shall find the Prefect hastening
In the Pavilion to receive him—here
I slay the Prefect; meanwhile Ayoob leads
The Nuncio with his guards within: once these
Secured in the outer hall, bid Ayoob bar
Entry or egress till I give the sign
Which waits the landing of the argosies
You will announce to me: this double sign
That justice is performed and help arrived,
When Ayoob shall receive, but not before,
Let him throw ope the palace doors, admit
The Druses to behold their tyrant, ere
We leave for ever this detested spot.

Go, Khalil, hurry all! No pause, no pause!
Whirl on the dream, secure to wake anon!

Khalil. What sign? and who the bearer?

Djabal. Who shall show
My ring, admit to Ayoob. How she stands!
Have I not . . . I must have some task for her.
Anael, not that way! 'T is the Prefect's chamber!
Anael, keep you the ring—give you the sign!
(It holds her safe amid the stir.) You will
Be faithful?

Anael [*taking the ring*]. I would fain be worthy. Hark!
[*Trumpet without.*

Khalil. He comes.

Djabal. And I too come.

Anael. One word, but one!
Say, shall you be exalted at the deed?
Then? On the instant?

Djabal. I exalted? What?
He, there—we, thus—our wrongs revenged, our tribe
Set free? Oh, then shall I, assure yourself,
Shall you, shall each of us, be in his death
Exalted!

Khalil. He is here.

Djabal. Away—away! [*They go.*

Enter the PREFECT *with* Guards, *and* LOYS.

The Prefect [*to* Guards]. Back, I say, to the galley every guard!
That's my sole care now; see each bench retains
Its complement of rowers; I embark
O' the instant, since this Knight will have it so.
Alas me! Could you have the heart, my Loys!
[*To a* Guard *who whispers.*] Oh, bring the holy Nuncio here forthwith! [*The* Guards *go.*
Loys, a rueful sight, confess, to see
The grey discarded Prefect leave his post,
With tears i' the eye! So, you are Prefect now?
You depose me—you succeed me? Ha, ha!

Loys. And dare you laugh, whom laughter less becomes
Than yesterday's forced meekness we beheld . . .

Prefect. —When you so eloquently pleaded, Loys,
For my dismissal from the post? Ah, meek
With cause enough, consult the Nuncio else!
And wish him the like meekness: for so staunch
A servant of the Church can scarce have bought
His share in the Isle, and paid for it, hard pieces!
You 've my successor to condole with, Nuncio!
I shall be safe by then i' the galley, Loys!

Loys. You make as you would tell me you rejoice
To leave your scene of . . .

Prefect. Trade in the dear Druses?
Blood and sweat traffic? Spare what yesterday
We heard enough of! Drove I in the Isle
A profitable game? Learn wit, my son,
Which you 'll need shortly! Did it never breed
Suspicion in you, all was not pure profit,
When I, the insatiate . . . and so forth—was bent
On having a partaker in my rule?
Why did I yield this Nuncio half the gain,
If not that I might also shift—what on him?
Half of the peril, Loys!

Loys. Peril?

Prefect. Hark you!
I 'd love you if you 'd let me—this for reason,
You save my life at price of . . . well, say risk
At least, of yours. I came a long time since
To the Isle; our Hospitallers bade me tame
These savage wizards, and reward myself—

Loys. The Knights who so repudiate your crime?

Prefect. Loys, the Knights! we doubtless understood
Each other; as for trusting to reward
From any friend beside myself . . . no, no!
I clutched mine on the spot, when it was sweet,
And I had taste for it. I felt these wizards
Alive—was sure they were not on me, only
When I was on them: but with age comes caution:

And stinging pleasures please less and sting more.
Year by year, fear by fear! The girls were brighter
Than ever ('faith, there 's yet one Anael left,
I set my heart upon—Oh, prithee, let
That brave new sword lie still!)—These joys looked brighter,
But silenter the town, too, as I passed.
With this alcove's delicious memories
Began to mingle visions of gaunt fathers,
Quick-eyed sons, fugitives from the mine, the oar,
Stealing to catch me. Brief, when I began
To quake with fear—(I think I hear the Chapter
Solicited to let me leave, now all
Worth staying for was gained and gone!)—I say,
Just when, for the remainder of my life,
All methods of escape seemed lost—that then
Up should a young hot-headed Loys spring,
Talk very long and loud,—in fine, compel
The Knights to break their whole arrangement, have me
Home for pure shame—from this safehold of mine
Where but ten thousand Druses seek my life,
To my wild place of banishment, San Gines
By Murcia, where my three fat manors lying,
Purchased by gains here and the Nuncio's gold,
Are all I have to guard me,—that such fortune

Should fall to me, I hardly could expect.
Therefore I say, I 'd love you.
Loys. Can it be?
I play into your hands then? Oh no, no!
The Venerable Chapter, the Great Order
Sunk o' the sudden into fiends of the pit?
But I will back—will yet unveil you!
Prefect. Me?
To whom?—perhaps Sir Galeas, who in Chapter
Shook his white head thrice—and some dozen times
My hand next morning shook, for value paid!
To that Italian saint, Sir Cosimo?—
Indignant at my wringing year by year
A thousand bezants from the coral-divers,
As you recounted; felt the saint aggrieved?
Well might he—I allowed for his half-share
Merely one hundred. To Sir . . .
Loys. See! you dare
Inculpate the whole Order; yet should I,
A youth, a sole voice, have the power to change
Their evil way, had they been firm in it?
Answer me!
Prefect. Oh, the son of Bretagne's Duke,
And that son's wealth, the father's influence, too,
And the young arm, we 'll even say, my Loys,
—The fear of losing or diverting these

Into another channel, by gainsaying
A novice too abruptly, could not influence
The Order! You might join, for aught they cared,
Their red-cross rivals of the Temple! Well,
I thank you for my part, at all events.
Stay here till they withdraw you! You 'll inhabit
My palace—sleep, perchance, in the alcove
Whither I go to meet our holy friend.
Good! and now disbelieve me if you can,—
This is the first time for long years I enter
Thus [*lifts the arras*] without feeling just as if I lifted
The lid up of my tomb.

Loys. They share his crime!
God's punishment will overtake you yet.

Prefect. Thank you it does not! Pardon this last flash:
I bear a sober visage presently
With the disinterested Nuncio here—
His purchase-money safe at Murcia, too!
Let me repeat—for the first time, no draught
Coming as from a sepulchre salutes me.
When we next meet, this folly may have passed,
We 'll hope. Ha, ha! [*Goes through the arras.*

Loys. Assure me but . . . he 's gone!
He could not lie. Then what have I escaped,
I, who had so nigh given up happiness

For ever, to be linked with him and them!
Oh, opportunest of discoveries! I
Their Knight? I utterly renounce them all!
Hark! What, he meets by this the Nuncio? Yes,
The same hyæna groan-like laughter! Quick—
To Djabal! I am one of them at last,
These simple hearted Druses - Anael's tribe!
Djabal! She 's mine at last. Djabal, I say! [*Goes.*

ACT IV.

Enter DJABAL.

Djabal. Let me but slay the Prefect. The end now!
To-morrow will be time enough to pry
Into the means I took: suffice, they served,
Ignoble as they were, to hurl revenge
True to its object. [*Seeing the robe, etc. disposed.*
Mine should never so
Have hurried to accomplishment! Thee, Djabal,
Far other mood befitted! Calm the Robe
Should clothe this doom's awarder!
[*Taking the robe.*] Shall I dare
Assume my nation's Robe? I am at least
A Druse again, chill Europe's policy
Drops from me: I dare take the Robe. Why not
The Tiar? I rule the Druses, and what more
Betokens it than rule?—yet—yet— [*Lays down the tiar.*
[*Footsteps in the alcove.*] He comes! [*Taking the sword.*
If the Sword serve, let the Tiar lie! So, feet

Clogged with the blood of twenty years can fall
Thus lightly! Round me, all ye ghosts! He 'll lift . .
Which arm to push the arras wide?—or both?
Stab from the neck down to the heart—there stay!
Near he comes—nearer —the next footstep! Now!
[*As he dashes aside the arras,* ANAEL *is discovered.*
Ha! Anael! Nay, my Anael, can it be?
Heard you the trumpet? I must slay him here,
And here you ruin all. Why speak you not?
Anael, the Prefect comes! [ANAEL *screams.*] So slow to feel
'T is not a sight for you to look upon?
A moment's work—but such work! Till you go,
I must be idle—idle, I risk all! [*Pointing to her hair*
Those locks are well, and you are beauteous thus,
But with the dagger 't is, I have to do!

Anael. With mine!

Djabal. Blood—Anael?

Anael. Djabal, 't is thy deed.
It must be! I had hoped to claim it mine—
Be worthy thee—but I must needs confess
'T was not I, but thyself . . . not I have . . . Djabal!
Speak to me!

Djabal. Oh, my punishment!

Anael. Speak to me
While I can speak! touch me, despite the blood!

When the command passed from thy soul to mine,
I went, fire leading me, muttering of thee,
And the approaching exaltation,—"make
"One sacrifice!" I said,—and he sat there,
Bade me approach; and, as I did approach,
Thy fire with music burst into my brain.
'T was but a moment's work, thou saidst—perchance
It may have been so! Well, it is thy deed.

Djabal. It is my deed.

Anael. His blood all this!—this! and . .
And more! Sustain me, Djabal! Wait not—now
Let flash thy glory! Change thyself and me!
It must be! Ere the Druses flock to us!
At least confirm me! Djabal, blood gushed forth—
He was our tyrant—but I looked he 'd fall
Prone as asleep—why else is death called sleep?
Sleep? He bent o'er his breast! 'T is sin, I know,—
Punish me, Djabal, but wilt thou let him?
Be it thou that punishest, not he who creeps
On his red breast—is here! 'T is the small groan
Of a child—no worse! Bestow the new life, then!
Too swift it cannot be, too strange, surpassing!

[*Following him as he retreats.*

Now! Change us both! Change me and change thou!

Djabal [*sinks on his knees*]. Thus!
Behold my change! You have done nobly. I!—

Anael. Can Hakeem kneel?

Djabal. No Hakeem, and scarce Djabal!
I have dealt falsely, and this woe is come.
No—hear me ere scorn blast me! Once and ever,
The deed is mine. Oh think upon the past!

Anael [*to herself*]. Did I strike once, or twice, or many times?

Djabal. I came to lead my tribe where, bathed in glooms,
Doth Bahumid the Renovator sleep:
Anael, I saw my tribe: I said, "Without
"A miracle this cannot be"—I said
"Be there a miracle!"—for I saw you.

Anael. His head lies south the portal.

Djabal. —Weighed with this
The general good, how could I choose my own?
What matter was my purity of soul?
Little by little I engaged myself—
Heaven would accept me for its instrument,
I hoped: I said Heaven had accepted me.

Anael. Is it this blood breeds dreams in me? Who said
You were not Hakeem? And your miracles—
The fire that plays innocuous round your form?
[*Again changing her whole manner.*
Ah, thou wouldst try me—thou art Hakeem still!

Djabal. Woe—woe! As if the Druses of the Mount
(Scarce Arabs, even there, but here, in the Isle,
Beneath their former selves) should comprehend
The subtle lore of Europe! A few secrets
That would not easily affect the meanest
Of the crowd there, could wholly subjugate
The best of our poor tribe. Again that eye?

Anael [*after a pause springs to his neck*]. Djabal, in this there can be no deceit!
Why, Djabal, were you human only,—think,
Maani is but human, Khalil human,
Loys is human even—did their words
Haunt me, their looks pursue me? Shame on you
So to have tried me! Rather, shame on me
So to need trying! Could I, with the Prefect
And the blood, there—could I see only you?
—Hang by your neck over this gulf of blood?
Speak, I am saved! Speak, Djabal! Am I saved?

[*As* DJABAL *slowly unclasps her arms, and puts her silently from him,*

Hakeem would save me. Thou art Djabal. Crouch!
Bow to the dust, thou basest of our kind!
The pile of thee, I reared up to the cloud—
Full, midway, of our fathers' trophied tombs,
Based on the living rock, devoured not by
The unstable desert's jaws of sand,—falls prone.

Fire, music, quenched: and now thou liest there
A ruin, obscene creatures will moan through.
—Let us come, Djabal!

Djabal. Whither come?

Anael. At once—
Lest so it grow intolerable. Come!
Will I not share it with thee? Best at once!
So, feel less pain! Let them deride,—thy tribe
Now trusting in thee,—Loys shall deride!
Come to them, hand in hand, with me!

Djabal. Where come?

Anael. Where?—to the Druses thou hast wronged! Confess,
Now that the end is gained—(I love thee now—)
That thou hast so deceived them—(perchance love thee
Better than ever.) Come, receive their doom
Of infamy! O, best of all I love thee!
Shame with the man, no triumph with the God,
Be mine! Come!

Djabal. Never! More shame yet? and why?
Why? You have called this deed mine—it is mine!
And with it I accept its circumstance.
How can I longer strive with fate? The past
Is past: my false life shall henceforth show true
Hear me! The argosies touch land by this:
They bear us to fresh scenes and happier skies.

What if we reign together?—if we keep
Our secret for the Druses' good?—by means
Of even their superstition, plant in them
New life? I learn from Europe: all who seek
Man's good must awe man, by such means as these.
We two will be divine to them—we are!
All great works in this world spring from the ruins
Of greater projects—ever, on our earth,
Babels men block out, Babylons they build.
I wrest the weapon from your hand! I claim
The deed! Retire! You have my ring—you bar
All access to the Nuncio till the forces
From Venice land.

Anael. Thou wilt feign Hakeem then?

Djabal [*putting the Tiara of Hakeem on his head*].
And from this moment that I dare ope wide
Eyes that till now refused to see, begins
My true dominion: for I know myself,
And what am I to personate. No word?

[ANAEL *goes.*

'T is come on me at last! His blood on her——
What memories will follow that! Her eye,
Her fierce distorted lip and ploughed black brow!
Ah, fool! Has Europe then so poorly tamed
The Syrian blood from out thee? Thou, presume
To work in this foul earth by means not foul?

Scheme, as for heaven,—but, on the earth, be glad
If a least ray like heaven's be left thee!
Thus
I shall be calm—in readiness—no way
Surprised. [*A noise without.*
This should be Khalil and my Druses.
Venice is come then! Thus I grasp thee, sword!
Druses, 't is Hakeem saves you! In! Behold
Your Prefect!

Enter LOYS. DJABAL *hides the khandjar in his robe.*

Loys. Oh, well found, Djabal!—but no time for words.
You know who waits there? [*Pointing to the alcove.*
Well!—and that 't is there
He meets the Nuncio? Well? Now, a surprise—
He there—

Djabal. I know—

Loys. ——is now no mortal's lord,
Is absolutely powerless—call him, dead
He is no longer Prefect—you are Prefect!
Oh, shrink not! I do nothing in the dark,
Nothing unworthy Breton blood, believe!
I understood at once your urgency
That I should leave this isle for Rhodes; I felt
What you were loath to speak—your need of help.
I have fulfilled the task, that earnestness

Imposed on me: have, face to face, confronted
The Prefect in full Chapter, charged on him
The enormities of his long rule; he stood
Mute, offered no defence, no crime denied.
On which, I spoke of you, and of your tribe,
Your faith so like our own, and all you urged
Of old to me: I spoke, too, of your goodness,
Your patience—brief, I hold henceforth the Isle
In charge, am nominally lord, but you,
You are associated in my rule—
Are the true Prefect! Ay, such faith had they
In my assurance of your loyalty
(For who insults an imbecile old man?)
That we assume the Prefecture this hour.
You gaze at me? Hear greater wonders yet—
I cast down all the fabric I have built.
These Knights, I was prepared to worship . . . .
but
Of that another time; what 's now to say,
Is—I shall never be a Knight! Oh, Djabal,
Here first I throw all prejudice aside,
And call you brother! I am Druse like you:
My wealth, my friends, my power, are wholly yours,
Your people's, which is now my people: for
There is a maiden of your tribe, I love —
She loves me—Khalil's sister——

Djabal. Anael?

Loys. Start you?

Seems what I say, unknightly? Thus it chanced:
When first I came, a novice, to the isle . . .

Enter one of the NUNCIO'S Guards *from the alcove.*

Guard. Oh horrible! Sir Loys! Here is Loys!
And here— [*Others enter from the alcove.*
[*Pointing to* DJABAL.] Secure him, bind him—this is he!
[*They surround* DJABAL.

Loys. Madmen—what is 't you do? Stand from my friend,
And tell me!

Guard. Thou canst have no part in this—
Surely no part! But slay him not! The Nuncio
Commanded, slay him not!

Loys. Speak, or . . .

Guard. The Prefect
Lies murdered there by him thou dost embrace.

Loys. By Djabal? Miserable fools! How Djabal?
[*A* Guard *lifts* DJABAL'S *robe*; DJABAL *flings down the khandjar.*

Loys [*after a pause*]. Thou hast received some insult worse than all,
Some outrage not to be endured—
[*To the* Guards.] Stand back!

He is my friend—more than my friend. Thou hast
Slain him upon that provocation.

Guard. No!

No provocation! 'T is a long devised
Conspiracy: the whole tribe is involved.
He is their Khalif—'t is on that pretence—
Their mighty Khalif who died long ago,
And now comes back to life and light again!
All is just now revealed, I know not how,
By one of his confederates—who, struck
With horror at this murder, first apprised
The Nuncio. As 't was said, we find this Djabal
Here where we take him.

Djabal [*aside*]. Who broke faith with me?

Loys [*to* DJABAL]. Hear'st thou? Speak! Till thou speak, I keep off these,
Or die with thee. Deny this story! Thou
A Khalif, an impostor? Thou, my friend,
Whose tale was of an inoffensive tribe,
With . . . but thou know'st—on that tale's truth I pledged
My faith before the Chapter: what art thou?

Djabal. Loys, I am as thou hast heard. All 's true.
No more concealment! As these tell thee, all
Was long since planned. Our Druses are enough
To crush this handful: the Venetians land
Even now in our behalf. Loys, we part.

Thou, serving much, wouldst fain have served me more;
It might not be. I thank thee. As thou hearest,
We are a separated tribe: farewell!

Loys. Oh where will truth be found now? Canst thou so
Belie the Druses? Do they share thy crime?
Those thou professest of our Breton stock,
Are partners with thee? Why, I saw but now
Khalil, my friend: he spoke with me -no word
Of this! and Anael—whom I love, and who
Loves me—she spoke no word of this.

Djabal. Poor boy!
Anael, who loves thee? Khalil, fast thy friend?
We, offsets from a wandering Count of Dreux?
No: older than the oldest, princelier
Than Europe's princeliest race, our tribe: enough
For thine, that on our simple faith we found
A monarchy to shame your monarchies
At their own trick and secret of success.
The child of this our tribe shall laugh upon
The palace-step of him whose life ere night
Is forfeit, as that child shall know, and yet
Shall laugh there! What, we Druses wait forsooth
The kind interposition of a boy
—Can only save ourselves if thou concede:
—Khalil admire thee? He is my right-hand,

My delegate!—Anael accept thy love?
She is my bride!

Loys. Thy bride? She one of them?

Djabal. My bride!

Loys. And she retains her glorious eyes!
She, with those eyes, has shared this miscreant's guilt!
Ah—who but she directed me to find
Djabal within the Prefect's chamber? Khalil
Bade me seek Djabal there, too. All is truth.
What spoke the Prefect worse of them than this?
Did the Church ill to institute long since
Perpetual warfare with such serpentry?
And I—have I desired to shift my part,
Evade my share in her design? 'T is well.

Djabal. Loys, I wronged thee—but unwittingly:
I never thought there was in thee a virtue
That could attach itself to what thou deemest
A race below thine own. I wronged thee, Loys,
But that is over: all is over now,
Save the protection I ensure against
My people's anger. By their Khalif's side,
Thou art secure and mayst depart: so, come!

Loys. Thy side? I take protection at thy hand?

Enter other Guards.

Guards. Fly with him! Fly, Sir Loys! 'T is too true:

And only by his side thou mayst escape.
The whole tribe is in full revolt: they flock
About the palace—will be here—on thee —
And there are twenty of us, we the Guards
O' the Nuncio, to withstand them! Even we
Had stayed to meet our death in ignorance,
But that one Druse, a single faithful Druse,
Made known the horror to the Nuncio. Fly!
The Nuncio stands aghast. At least let us
Escape thy wrath, O Hakeem! We are nought
In thy tribe's persecution! [*To* LOYS.] Keep by him!
They hail him Hakeem, their dead Prince returned:
He is their God, they shout, and at his beck
Are life and death!

Loys [*springing at the khandjar* DJABAL *had thrown down, seizes him by the throat*].

Thus by his side am I!
Thus I resume my knighthood and its warfare,
Thus end thee, miscreant, in thy pride of place!
Thus art thou caught. Without, thy dupes may cluster:
Friends aid thee, foes avoid thee,—thou art Hakeem,
How say they?—God art thou! but also here
Is the least, youngest, meanest the Church calls
Her servant, and his single arm avails
To aid her as she lists. I rise, and thou
Art crushed. Hordes of thy Druses flock without:

Here thou hast me, who represent the Cross,
Honour and Faith, 'gainst Hell, Mahound and thee.
Die! [DJABAL *remains calm.*] Implore my mercy,
Hakeem, that my scorn
May help me! Nay, I cannot ply thy trade;
I am no Druse, no stabber: and thine eye,
Thy form, are too much as they were—my friend
Had such. Speak! Beg for mercy at my foot!
[DJABAL *still silent.*
Heaven could not ask so much of me—not, sure,
So much. I cannot kill him so.
[*After a pause.*] Thou art
Strong in thy cause, then—dost outbrave us, then.
Heardst thou that one of thine accomplices,
Thy very people, has accused thee? Meet
His charge! Thou hast not even slain the Prefect
As thy own vile creed warrants. Meet that Druse!
Come with me and disprove him—be thou tried
By him, nor seek appeal! Promise me this,
Or I will do God's office. What, shalt thou
Boast of assassins at thy beck, yet truth
Want even an executioner? Consent,
Or I will strike—look in my face—I will!

Djabal. Give me again my khandjar, if thou darest!
[LOYS *gives it.*
Let but one Druse accuse me, and I plunge

This home. A Druse betray me? Let us go!
[*Aside.*] Who has betrayed me? [*Shouts without.*
Hearest thou? I hear
No plainer than long years ago I heard
That shout—but in no dream now. They return!
Wilt thou be leader with me, Loys? Well.

ACT V.

The Uninitiated Druses, *filling the hall tumultuously, and speaking together.*

Here flock we, obeying the summons. Lo, Hakeem hath appeared, and the Prefect is dead, and we return to Lebanon! My manufacture of goats' fleece must, I doubt, soon fall away there. Come, old Nasif—link thine arm in mine—we fight, if needs be. Come, what is a great fight-word?—"Lebanon?" (My daughter—my daughter!) —But is Khalil to have the office of Hamza?—Nay, rather, if he be wise, the monopoly of henna and cloves. Where is Hakeem?—The only prophet I ever saw, prophesied at Cairo once, in my youth: a little black Copht, dressed all in black too, with a great stripe of yellow cloth flapping down behind him like the back-fin of a water-serpent. Is this he? Biamrallah! Biamreh! HAKEEM!

Enter the NUNCIO, *with* Guards.

Nuncio [*to his* Attendants]. Hold both, the sorcerer and this accomplice

Ye talk of, that accuseth him! And tell
Sir Loys he is mine, the Church's hope:
Bid him approve himself our Knight indeed!
Lo, this black disemboguing of the Isle!
[*To the* Druses.] Ah children, what a sight for these old eyes
That kept themselves alive this voyage through
To smile their very last on you! I came
To gather one and all you wandering sheep
Into my fold, as though a father came . . .
As though, in coming, a father should . . .
[*To his* Guards.] (Ten, twelve
—Twelve guards of you, and not an outlet? None?
The wizards stop each avenue? Keep close!)
[*To the* Druses.] As if one came to a son's house, I say,
So did I come—no guard with me—to find . . .
Alas – alas!

A Druse. Who is the old man?

Another. Oh, ye are to shout!
Children, he styles you.

Druses. Ay, the Prefect 's slain!
Glory to the Khalif, our Father!

Nuncio. Even so
I find, (ye prompt aright) your father slain.
While most he plotted for your good, that father

(Alas, how kind, ye never knew) —lies slain.
[*Aside.*] (And hell's worm gnaw the glozing knave—with me,
For being duped by his cajoleries!
Are these the Christians? These the docile crew
My bezants went to make me Bishop o'er?)
[*To his* Attendants, *who whisper.*] What say ye does this wizard style himself?
Hakeem? Biamrallah? The third Fatemite?
What is this jargon? He—the insane Khalif,
Dead near three hundred years ago, come back
In flesh and blood again?
Druses. He mutters! Hear ye?
He is blaspheming Hakeem. The old man
Is our dead Prefect's friend. Tear him!
Nuncio. Ye dare not.
I stand here with my five-and-seventy years,
The Patriarch's power behind me, God's above.
Those years have witnessed sin enough; ere now
Misguided men arose against their lords,
And found excuse; but ye, to be enslaved
By sorceries, cheats—alas! the same tricks, tried
On my poor children in this nook o' the earth,
Could triumph, that have been successively
Exploded, laughed to scorn, all nations through:
"*Romaioi, Ioudaioite kai proselutoi,*

"Cretes and Arabians"—you are duped the last.
Said I, refrain from tearing me? I pray ye
Tear me! Shall I return to tell the Patriarch
That so much love was wasted—every gift
Rejected, from his benison I brought,
Down to the galley-full of bezants, sunk
An hour since at the harbour's mouth, by that . . .
That . . never will I speak his hated name!
[*To his* Servants.] What was the name his fellow slip-
fetter
Called their arch-wizard by? [*They whisper.*] Oh, Djabal
was 't.
Druses. But how a sorcerer? false wherein?
Nuncio. (Ay, Djabal!)
How false? Ye know not, Djabal has confessed . . .
Nay, that by tokens found on him we learn . . .
What I sailed hither solely to divulge—
How by his spells the demons were allured
To seize you: not that these be aught save lies
And mere illusions. Is this clear? I say,
By measures such as these, he would have led you
Into a monstrous ruin: follow ye?
Say, shall ye perish for his sake, my sons?
Druses. Hark ye!
Nuncio. —Be of one privilege amerced?
No! Infinite the Patriarch's mercies are!

No! With the Patriarch's licence, still I bid
Tear him to pieces who misled you! Haste!

Druses. The old man's beard shakes, and his eyes are white fire! After all, I know nothing of Djabal beyond what Karshook says; he knows but what Khalil says, who knows just what Djabal says himself. Now, the little Copht Prophet, I saw at Cairo in my youth, began by promising each bystander three full measures of wheat . . .

Enter KHALIL *and the initiated* DRUSES.

Khalil. Venice and her deliverance are at hand:
Their fleet stands through the harbour. Hath he slain
The Prefect yet? Is Djabal's change come yet?

Nuncio [*to* Attendants]. What 's this of Venice? Who 's this boy?

[Attendants *whisper.*] One Khalil?
Djabal's accomplice, Loys called, but now,
The only Druse, save Djabal's self, to fear?
[*To the Druses.*] I cannot hear ye with these aged ears:
Is it so? Ye would have my troops assist?
Doth he abet him in his sorceries?
Down with the cheat, guards, as my children bid!

[*They spring at* KHALIL; *as he beats them back,*

Stay! No more bloodshed! Spare deluded youth!

Whom seek'st thou? (I will teach him)—whom, my child?
Thou know'st not what these know, what these declare.
I am an old man as thou seest—have done
With life; and what should move me but the truth?
Art thou the only fond one of thy tribe?
'T is I interpret for thy tribe.

Khalil. Oh, this
Is the expected Nuncio! Druses, hear—
Endure ye this? Unworthy to partake
The glory Hakeem gains you! While I speak,
The ships touch land: who makes for Lebanon?
They plant the winged lion in these halls!

Nuncio [*aside*]. If it be true! Venice? Oh, never true!
Yet Venice would so gladly thwart our Knights,
So fain get footing here, stand close by Rhodes!
Oh, to be duped this way!

Khalil. Ere he appear
And lead you gloriously, repent, I say!

Nuncio [*aside*]. Nor any way to stretch the arch-wizard stark
Ere the Venetians come? Cut off the head,
The trunk were easily stilled. [*To the* Druses.] He? Bring him forth!
Since so you needs will have it, I assent.

You 'd judge him, say you, on the spot—confound
The sorcerer in his very circle? Where 's
Our short black-bearded sallow friend who swore
He 'd earn the Patriarch's guerdon by one stab?
Bring Djabal forth at once!

Druses. Ay, bring him forth!
The Patriarch drives a trade in oil and silk,
And we 're the Patriarch's children—true men, we!
Where is the glory? Show us all the glory!

Khalil. You dare not so insult him! What, not see . .
(I tell thee, Nuncio, these are uninstructed,
Untrusted: they know nothing of our Khalif!)
—Not see that if he lets a doubt arise
'T is but to give yourselves the chance of seeming
To have some influence in your own Return!
That all may say ye would have trusted him
Without the all-convincing glory—ay,
And did! Embrace the occasion, friends! For, think—
What wonder when his change takes place? But now
For your sakes, he should not reveal himself.
No: could I ask and have, I would not ask
The change yet!

Enter DJABAL *and* LOYS.

Spite of all, reveal thyself!
I had said, pardon them for me—for Anael—

For our sakes pardon these besotted men—
Ay, for thine own—they hurt not thee! Yet now
One thought swells in me and keeps down all else.
This Nuncio couples shame with thee, has called
Imposture thy whole course, all bitter things
Has said: he is but an old fretful man!
Hakeem—nay, I must call thee Hakeem now—
Reveal thyself! See! Where is Anael? See!

Loys [*to* DJABAL]. Here are thy people. Keep thy word to me!

Djabal. Who of my people hath accused me?

Nuncio. So!

So this is Djabal, Hakeem, and what not?
A fit deed, Loys, for thy first Knight's day!
May it be augury of thy after-life!
Ever prove truncheon of the Church as now
That, Nuncio of the Patriarch, having charge
Of the Isle here, I claim thee [*turning to* DJABAL] as these bid me,
Forfeit for murder done thy lawful prince,
Thou conjurer that peep'st and mutterest!
Why should I hold thee from their hands? (Spells, children?
But hear how I dispose of all his spells!)
Thou art a prophet?—wouldst entice thy tribe
From me?—thou workest miracles? (Attend!

Let him but move me with his spells!) I, Nuncio . . .

Djabal. . . . Which how thou camest to be, I say not now,

Though I have also been at Stamboul, Luke!
Ply thee with spells, forsooth! What need of spells?
If Venice, in her Admiral's person, stoop
To ratify thy compact with her foe,
The Hospitallers, for this Isle – withdraw
Her warrant of the deed which reinstates
My people in their freedom, tricked away
By him I slew,—refuse to convoy us
To Lebanon and keep the Isle we leave—
Then will be time to try what spells can do!
Dost thou dispute the Republic's power?

Nuncio. Lo ye!

He tempts me too, the wily exorcist!
No! The renowned Republic was and is
The Patriarch's friend: 't is not for courting Venice
That I—that these implore thy blood of me.
Lo ye, the subtle miscreant! Ha, so subtle?
Ye, Druses, hear him. Will ye be deceived?
How he evades me! Where 's the miracle
He works? I bid him to the proof—fish up
Your galley-full of bezants that he sank!
That were a miracle! One miracle!
Enough of trifling, for it chafes my years

I am the Nuncio, Druses! I stand forth
To save you from the good Republic's rage
When she shall find her fleet was summoned here
To aid the mummeries of a knave like this.
[*As the* Druses *hesitate, his* Attendants *whisper.*
Ah, well suggested! Why, we hold the while
One who, his close confederate till now,
Confesses Djabal at the last a cheat,
And every miracle a cheat. Who throws me
His head? I make three offers, once I offer,—
And twice . . .

Djabal. Let who moves perish at my foot!

Khalil. Thanks, Hakeem, thanks! Oh, Anael, Maani,
Why tarry they?

Druses [*to each other*]. He can! He can! Live fire—
[*To the* NUNCIO.] I say he can, old man! Thou know'st
him not.
Live fire like that thou seest now in his eyes,
Plays fawning round him. See! The change begins.
All the brow lightens as he lifts his arm.
Look not at me! It was not I!

Djabal. What Druse
Accused me, as he saith? I bid each bone
Crumble within that Druse! None, Loys, none
Of my own people, as thou said'st, have raised
A voice against me.

Nuncio [*aside*]. Venice to come! Death!

Djabal [*continuing*]. Confess and go unscathed, however false!

Seest thou my Druses, Luke? I would submit
To thy pure malice did one Druse confess!
How said I, Loys?

Nuncio [*to his* Attendants *who whisper*]. Ah, ye counsel so?
[*Aloud.*] Bring in the witness, then, who, first of all,
Disclosed the treason! Now I have thee, wizard!
Ye hear that? If one speaks, he bids you tear him
Joint after joint: well then, one does speak! One,
Befooled by Djabal, even as yourselves,
But who hath voluntarily proposed
To expiate, by confessing thus, the fault
Of having trusted him. [*They bring in a veiled* Druse.

Loys. Now, Djabal, now!

Nuncio. Friend, Djabal fronts thee! Make a ring, sons. Speak!

Expose this Djabal—what he was, and how:
The wiles he used, the aims he cherished: all,
Explicitly as late 't was spoken to these
My servants: I absolve and pardon thee.

Loys. Thou hast the dagger ready, Djabal?

Djabal. Speak,
Recreant!

Druses. Stand back, fool! farther! Suddenly
You shall see some huge serpent glide from under
The empty vest, or down will thunder crash!
Back, Khalil!

Khalil. I go back? Thus go I back!
[*To* ANAEL.] Unveil! Nay, thou shalt face the Khalif!
Thus!

[*He tears away* ANAEL'S *veil;* DJABAL *folds his arms and bows his head; the* Druses *fall back;* LOYS *springs from the side of* DJABAL *and the* NUNCIO.

Loys. Then she was true—she only of them all!
True to her eyes—may keep those glorious eyes,
And now be mine, once again mine! Oh, Anael!
Dared I think thee a partner in his crime—
That blood could soil that hand? nay, 't is mine—
Anael,
—Not mine?—who offer thee before all these
My heart, my sword, my name—so thou wilt say
That Djabal, who affirms thou art his bride,
Lies—say but that he lies!

Djabal. Thou, Anael?

Loys. Nay, Djabal, nay, one chance for me—the last!
Thou hast had every other; thou hast spoken
Days, nights, what falsehood listed thee—let me

Speak first now; I will speak now!

Nuncio. Loys, pause!
Thou art the Duke's son, Bretagne's choicest stock,
Loys of Dreux, God's sepulchre's first sword:
'This wilt thou spit on, this degrade, this trample
To earth?

Loys [*to* ANAEL]. Who had foreseen that one day, Loys
Would stake these gifts against some other good
In the whole world? I give them thee! I would
My strong will might bestow real shape on them,
That I might see, with my own eyes, thy foot
Tread on their very neck! 'T is not by gifts
I put aside this Djabal: we will stand—
We do stand, see, two men! Djabal, stand forth!
Who 's worth her, I or thou? I—who for Anael
Uprightly, purely kept my way, the long
True way—left thee each by-path, boldly lived
Without the lies and blood,—or thou, or thou?
Me! love me, Anael! Leave the blood and him!
[*To* DJABAL.] Now speak—now, quick on this that I have said,—
Thou with the blood, speak if thou art a man!

Djabal [*to* ANAEL]. And was it thou betrayedst me? 'T is well!
I have deserved this of thee, and submit.

Nor 't is much evil thou inflictest: life
Ends here. The cedars shall not wave for us:
For there was crime, and must be punishment.
See fate! By thee I was seduced, by thee
I perish: yet do I—can I repent?
I with my Arab instinct, thwarted ever
By my Frank policy,—and with, in turn,
My Frank brain, thwarted by my Arab heart—
While these remained in equipoise, I lived
—Nothing; had either been predominant,
As a Frank schemer or an Arab mystic,
I had been something;—now, each has destroyed
The other—and behold, from out their crash,
A third and better nature rises up—
My mere man's-nature! And I yield to it:
I love thee, I who did not love before!

Anael. Djabal!

Djabal. It seemed love, but it was not love:
How could I love while thou adoredst me?
Now thou despisest, art above me so
Immeasurably! Thou, no other, doomest
My death now; this my steel shall execute
Thy judgment; I shall feel thy hand in it.
Oh luxury to worship, to submit,
Transcended, doomed to death by thee!

Anael. . . . . . My Djabal!

Djabal. Dost hesitate? I force thee then. Approach,
Druses! for I am out of reach of fate;
No further evil waits me Speak the doom!
Hear, Druses, and hear, Nuncio, and hear, Loys!

Anael. HAKEEM! [*She falls dead.*

[*The* Druses *scream, grovelling before him.*

Druses. Ah Hakeem!—not on me thy wrath!
Biamrallah, pardon! never doubted I!
Ha, dog, how sayest thou?

[*They surround and seize the* NUNCIO *and his* Guards. LOYS *flings himself upon the body of* ANAEL, *on which* DJABAL *continues to gaze as stupefied.*

Nuncio. Caitiffs! Have ye eyes?
Whips, racks should teach you! What, his fools? his dupes?
Leave me! Unhand me!

Khalil [*approaching* DJABAL *timidly*]. Save her for my sake!
She was already thine; she would have shared
To-day thine exaltation: think, this day
Her hair was plaited thus because of thee!
Yes, feel the soft bright hair—feel!

Nuncio [*struggling with those who have seized him*]. What, because
His leman dies for him? You think it hard

To die? Oh, would you were at Rhodes, and choice
Of deaths should suit you!

Khalil [*bending over* ANAEL'S *body*]. Just restore
her life!
So little does it! there—the eyelids tremble!
'T was not my breath that made them: and the lips
Move of themselves. I could restore her life!
Hakeem, we have forgotten—have presumed
On our free converse: we are better taught.
See, I kiss—how I kiss thy garment's hem
For her! She kisses it—Oh, take her deed
In mine! Thou dost believe now, Anael?—See,
She smiles! Were her lips open o'er the teeth
Thus, when I spoke first? She believes in thee!
Go not without her to the cedars, lord!
Or leave us both—I cannot go alone!
I have obeyed thee, if I dare so speak:
Hath Hakeem thus forgot all Djabal knew?
Thou feelest then my tears fall hot and fast
Upon thy hand, and yet thou speakest not?
Ere the Venetian trumpet sound—ere thou
Exalt thyself, O Hakeem! save thou her!

Nuncio. And the accursed Republic will arrive
And find me in their toils—dead, very like,
Under their feet!
What way—not one way yet

To foil them? None? [*Observing* DJABAL'S *face.*
What ails the Khalif? Ah,
That ghastly face! A way to foil them yet!
[*To the* Druses.] Look to your Khalif, Druses! Is that face
God Hakeem's? Where is triumph,—where is . . . what
Said he of exaltation—hath he promised
So much to-day? Why then, exalt thyself!
Cast off that husk, thy form, set free thy soul
In splendour! Now, bear witness! here I stand—
I challenge him exalt himself, and I
Become, for that, a Druse like all of you!

The Druses. Exalt thyself! Exalt thyself, O Hakeem!

Djabal [*advances*]. I can confess now all from first to last.
There is no longer shame for me. I am . . .

[*Here the Venetian trumpet sounds: the* Druses *shout,* DJABAL'S *eye catches the expression of those about him, and, as the old dream comes back, he is again confident and inspired.*

—Am I not Hakeem? And ye would have crawled
But yesterday within these impure courts
Where now ye stand erect! Not grand enough?
—What more could be conceded to such beasts
As all of you, so sunk and base as you,

Than a mere man? A man among such beasts
Was miracle enough: yet him you doubt,
Him you forsake, him fain would you destroy—
With the Venetians at your gate, the Nuncio
Thus—(see the baffled hypocrite!) and, best,
The Prefect there!

Druses. No, Hakeem, ever thine!

Nuncio. He lies – and twice he lies—and thrice he lies!

Exalt thyself, Mahound! Exalt thyself!

Djabal. Druses! we shall henceforth be far away—
Out of mere mortal ken—above the cedars—
But we shall see ye go, hear ye return,
Repeopling the old solitudes,—through thee,
My Khalil! Thou art full of me: I fill
Thee full—my hands thus fill thee! Yestereve,
—Nay, but this morn, I deemed thee ignorant
Of all to do, requiring word of mine
To teach it: now, thou hast all gifts in one,
With truth and purity go other gifts,
All gifts come clustering to that. Go, lead
My people home whate'er betide!
[*Turning to the* Druses.] Ye take
This Khalil for my delegate? To him
Bow as to me? He leads to Lebanon—
Ye follow?

Druses. We follow! Now exalt thyself!

Djabal [*raises* Lovs]. Then to thee, Loys! How I wronged thee, Loys!

Yet, wronged, no less thou shalt have full revenge,
Fit for thy noble self, revenge—and thus.
Thou, loaded with such wrongs, the princely soul,
The first sword of Christ's sepulchre—thou shalt
Guard Khalil and my Druses home again!
Justice, no less, God's justice and no more,
For those I leave! To seeking this, devote
Some few days out of thy Knight's brilliant life:
And, this obtained them, leave their Lebanon,
My Druses' blessing in thine ears—(they shall
Bless thee with blessing sure to have its way)
—One cedar-blossom in thy ducal cap,
One thought of Anael in thy heart,—perchance,
One thought of him who thus, to bid thee speed,
His last word to the living speaks! This done,
Resume thy course, and, first amidst the first
In Europe, take my heart along with thee!
Go boldly, go serenely, go augustly—
What shall withstand thee then?
[*He bends over* ANAEL.] And last to thee:
Ah, did I dream I was to have, this day,
Exalted thee? A vain dream: hast thou not
Won greater exaltation? What remains

But press to thee, exalt myself to thee?
Thus I exalt myself, set free my soul!

[*He stabs himself. As he falls, supported by* KHALIL *and* LOYS, *the* Venetians *enter; the* ADMIRAL *advances.*

Admiral. God and St. Mark for Venice! Plant the Lion!

[*At the clash of the planted standard, the* Druses *shout and move tumultuously forward,* LOYS *drawing his sword.*

Djabal [*leading them a few steps between* KHALIL *and* LOYS].

On to the Mountain! At the Mountain, Druses!

[*Dies.*

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY.

ACT FIRST,

BEING WHAT WAS CALLED THE POETRY OF CHIAPPINO'S LIFE:

AND ACT SECOND, ITS PROSE.

PERSONS.

LUITOLFO *and* EULALIA, *betrothed lovers.*

CHIAPPINO, *their friend.*

OGNIBEN, *the Pope's Legate.*

Citizens of Faenza.

TIME, 15—. PLACE, *Faenza.*

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY.

1846.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*Inside* LUITOLFO'S *house.* CHIAPPINO, EULALIA.

Eulalia. What is it keeps Luitolfo? Night 's fast falling,
And 't was scarce sunset . . . had the ave-bell
Sounded before he sought the Provost's house?
I think not: all he had to say would take
Few minutes, such a very few, to say!
How do you think, Chiappino? If our lord
The Provost were less friendly to your friend
Than everybody here professes him,
I should begin to tremble -should not you?
Why are you silent when so many times
I turn and speak to you?

Chiappino. That's good!

Eulalia. You laugh!

Chiappino. Yes. I had fancied nothing that bears price
In the whole world was left to call my own;
And, may be, felt a little pride thereat.
Up to a single man's or woman's love,
Down to the right in my own flesh and blood,
There 's nothing mine, I fancied,—till you spoke:
—Counting, you see, as "nothing" the permission
To study this peculiar lot of mine
In silence: well, go silence with the rest
Of the world's good! What can I say, shall serve?

Eulalia. This,—lest you, even more than needs, embitter
Our parting: say your wrongs have cast, for once,
A cloud across your spirit!

Chiappino. How a cloud?

Eulalia. No man nor woman loves you, did you say?

Chiappino. My God, were 't not for thee!

Eulalia. Ay, God remains,
Even did men forsake you.

Chiappino. Oh, not so!
Were 't not for God, I mean, what hope of truth—
Speaking truth, hearing truth, would stay with man?
I, now—the homeless friendless penniless
Proscribed and exiled wretch who speak to you,—
Ought to speak truth, yet could not, for my death,
(The thing that tempts me most) help speaking lies

About your friendship and Luitolfo's courage
And all our townsfolk's equanimity—
Through sheer incompetence to rid myself
Of the old miserable lying trick
Caught from the liars I have lived with,—God,
Did I not turn to thee! It is thy prompting
I dare to be ashamed of, and thy counsel
Would die along my coward lip, I know.
But I do turn to thee. This craven tongue,
These features which refuse the soul its way,
Reclaim thou! Give me truth—truth, power to speak—
And after be sole present to approve
The spoken truth! Or, stay, that spoken truth,
Who knows but you, too, may approve?

Eulalia. Ah, well—
Keep silence then, Chiappino!

Chiappino. You would hear,
You shall now,—why the thing we please to style
My gratitude to you and all your friends
For service done me, is just gratitude
So much as yours was service: no whit more.
I was born here, so was Luitolfo; both
At one time, much with the same circumstance
Of rank and wealth; and both, up to this night
Of parting company, have side by side
Still fared, he in the sunshine—I, the shadow.

"Why?" asks the world. "Because," replies the world
To its complacent self, "these playfellows,
"Who took at church the holy-water drop
"Each from the other's finger, and so forth,—
"Were of two moods: Luitolfo was the proper
"Friend-making, everywhere friend-finding soul,
"Fit for the sunshine, so, it followed him.
"A happy-tempered bringer of the best
"Out of the worst; who bears with what 's past cure,
"And puts so good a face on 't—wisely passive
"Where action 's fruitless, while he remedies
"In silence what the foolish rail against;
"A man to smooth such natures as parade
"Of opposition must exasperate;
"No general gauntlet-gatherer for the weak
"Against the strong, yet over-scrupulous
"At lucky junctures; one who won't forego
"The after-battle work of binding wounds,
"Because, forsooth he 'd have to bring himself
"To side with wound-inflictors for their leave!"
—Why do you gaze, nor help me to repeat
What comes so glibly from the common mouth,
About Luitolfo and his so-styled friend?

Eulalia. Because that friend's sense is obscured . . .

Chiappino. I thought
You would be readier with the other half

Of the world's story, my half! Yet, 't is true.
For all the world does say it. Say your worst!
True, I thank God, I ever said "you sin,"
When a man did sin: if I could not say it,
I glared it at him; if I could not glare it,
I prayed against him; then my part seemed over.
God's may begin yet: so it will, I trust.

Eulalia. If the world outraged you, did we?

Chiappino. What 's "me"
That you use well or ill? It 's man, in me,
All your successes are an outrage to,
You all, whom sunshine follows, as you say!
Here 's our Faenza birthplace; they send here
A provost from Ravenna: how he rules,
You can at times be eloquent about.
"Then, end his rule!"—"Ah yes, one stroke does that!
"But patience under wrong works slow and sure.
"Must violence still bring peace forth? He, beside,
"Returns so blandly one's obeisance! ah—
"Some latent virtue may be lingering yet,
"Some human sympathy which, once excite,
"And all the lump were leavened quietly:
"So, no more talk of striking, for this time!"
But I, as one of those he rules, won't bear
These pretty takings-up and layings-down
Our cause, just as you think occasion suits.

Enough of earnest, is there? You 'll play, will you?
Diversify your tactics, give submission,
Obsequiousness and flattery a turn,
While we die in our misery patient deaths?
We all are outraged then, and I the first:
I, for mankind, resent each shrug and smirk,
Each beck and bend, each . . . all you do and are,
I hate!

Eulalia. We share a common censure, then.
T is well you have not poor Luitolfo's part
Nor mine to point out in the wide offence.

Chiappino. Oh, shall I let you so escape me, lady?
Come, on your own ground, lady,—from yourself,
(Leaving the people's wrong, which most is mine)
What have I got to be so grateful for?
These three last fines, no doubt, one on the other
Paid by Luitolfo?

Eulalia. Shame, Chiappino!

Chiappino. Shame
Fall presently on who deserves it most!
—Which is to see. He paid my fines—my friend,
Your prosperous smooth lover presently,
Then, scarce your wooer,—soon, your husband: well—
I loved you.

Eulalia. Hold!

Chiappino. You knew it, years ago.

When my voice faltered and my eye grew dim
Because you gave me your silk mask to hold—
My voice that greatens when there 's need to curse
The people's Provost to their heart's content,
—My eye, the Provost, who bears all men's eyes,
Banishes now because he cannot bear,—
You knew . . . but you do your parts—my part, I:
So be it! You flourish, I decay: all 's well.

Eulalia. I hear this for the first time.

Chiappino. The fault 's there?
Then my days spoke not, and my nights of fire
Were voiceless? Then the very heart may burst,
Yet all prove nought, because no mincing speech
Tells leisurely that thus it is and thus?
Eulalia, truce with toying for this once!
A banished fool, who troubles you to-night
For the last time—why, what 's to fear from me?
You knew I loved you!

Eulalia. Not so, on my faith!
You were my now-affianced lover's friend—
Came in, went out with him, could speak as he.
All praise your ready parts and pregnant wit;
See how your words come from you in a crowd!
Luitolfo 's first to place you o'er himself
In all that challenges respect and love:
Yet you were silent then, who blame me now.

I say all this by fascination, sure:
I, all but wed to one I love, yet listen!
It must be, you are wronged, and that the wrongs
Luitolfo pities . . .

Chiappino. —You too pity? Do!
But hear first what my wrongs are; so began
This talk and so shall end this talk. I say,
Was 't not enough that I must strive (I saw)
To grow so far familiar with your charms
As next contrive some way to win them—which
To do, an age seemed far too brief—for, see!
We all aspire to heaven; and there lies heaven
Above us: go there! Dare we go? no, surely!
How dare we go without a reverent pause,
A growing less unfit for heaven? Just so,
I dared not speak: the greater fool, it seems!
Was 't not enough to struggle with such folly,
But I must have, beside, the very man
Whose slight free loose and incapacious soul
Gave his tongue scope to say whate'er he would
—Must have him load me with his benefits
—For fortune's fiercest stroke?

Eulalia. Justice to him
That 's now entreating, at his risk perhaps,
Justice for you! Did he once call those acts
Of simple friendship—bounties, benefits?

Chiappino. No: the straight course had been to call them thus.
Then, I had flung them back, and kept myself
Unhampered, free as he to win the prize
We both sought. But "the gold was dross," he said:
"He loved me, and I loved him not: why spurn
"A trifle out of superfluity?
"He had forgotten he had done as much."
So had not I! Henceforth, try as I could
To take him at his word, there stood by you
My benefactor; who might speak and laugh
And urge his nothings, even banter me
Before you—but my tongue was tied. A dream!
Let 's wake: your husband . . . how you shake at that!
Good—my revenge!

Eulalia. Why should I shake? What forced
Or forces me to be Luitolfo's bride?

Chiappino. There 's my revenge, that nothing forces you.
No gratitude, no liking of the eye
Nor longing of the heart, but the poor bond
Of habit—here so many times he came,
So much he spoke,—all these compose the tie
That pulls you from me. Well, he paid my fines,
Nor missed a cloak from wardrobe, dish from table;
He spoke a good word to the Provost here,

Held me up when my fortunes fell away
—It had not looked so well to let me drop—
Men take pains to preserve a tree-stump, even,
Whose boughs they played beneath—much more a friend.
But one grows tired of seeing, after the first,
Pains spent upon impracticable stuff
Like me. I could not change: you know the rest.
I 've spoke my mind too fully out, by chance,
This morning to our Provost; so, ere night
I leave the city on pain of death. And now
On my account there 's gallant intercession
Goes forward—that 's so graceful!—and anon
He 'll noisily come back: "the intercession
"Was made and fails; all 's over for us both;
"'T is vain contending; I would better go."
And I do go—and straight to you he turns
Light of a load; and ease of that permits
His visage to repair the natural bland
Œconomy, sore broken late to suit
My discontent. Thus, all are pleased—you, with him,
He with himself, and all of you with me
—"Who," say the citizens, "had done far better
"In letting people sleep upon their woes,
"If not possessed with talent to relieve them
"When once awake;—but then I had," they 'll say,
"Doubtless some unknown compensating pride

"In what I did; and as I seem content
"With ruining myself, why, so should they be."
And so they are, and so be with his prize
The devil, when he gets them speedily!
Why does not your Luitolfo come? I long
To don this cloak and take the Lugo path.
It seems you never loved me, then?

Eulalia. Chiappino!

Chiappino. Never?

Eulalia. Never.

Chiappino. That 's sad. Say what I might,
There was no help from being sure this while
You loved me. Love like mine must have return,
I thought: no river starts but to some sea.
And had you loved me, I could soon devise
Some specious reason why you stifled love,
Some fancied self-denial on your part,
Which made you choose Luitolfo; so, excepting
From the wide condemnation of all here,
One woman. Well, the other dream may break!
If I knew any heart, as mine loved you,
Loved me, though in the vilest breast 't were lodged,
I should, I think, be forced to love again:
Else there 's no right nor reason in the world.

Eulalia. "If you knew," say you,—but I did not know.

That 's where you 're blind, Chiappino !—a disease
Which if I may remove, I 'll not repent
The listening to. You cannot, will not, see
How, place you but in every circumstance
Of us, you are just now indignant at,
You 'd be as we.

Chiappino. I should be? . . . that; again!
I, to my friend, my country and my love,
Be as Luitolfo and these Faentines?

Eulalia. As we.

Chiappino. Now, I 'll say something to remember.
I trust in nature for the stable laws
Of beauty and utility.—Spring shall plant,
And Autumn garner to the end of time:
I trust in God—the right shall be the right
And other than the wrong, while he endures:
I trust in my own soul, that can perceive
The outward and the inward, nature's good
And God's: so, seeing these men and myself,
Having a right to speak, thus do I speak.
I 'll not curse—God bears with them, well may I—
But I—protest against their claiming me.
I simply say, if that 's allowable
I would not (broadly) do as they have done.
—God curse this townful of born slaves, bred slaves,
Branded into the blood and bone, slaves! Curse

Whoever loves, above his liberty,
House, land or life! and . . . [*A knocking without.*
—bless my hero-friend,
Luitolfo!

Eulalia. How he knocks!

Chiappino. The peril, lady!
"Chiappino, I have run a risk—a risk!
"For when I prayed the Provost (he 's my friend)
"To grant you a week's respite of the sentence
"That confiscates your goods, exiles yourself,
"He shrugged his shoulder—I say, shrugged it! Yes,
"And fright of that drove all else from my head.
"Here 's a good purse of *scudi:* off with you,
"Lest of that shrug come what God only knows!
"The *scudi*—friend, they 're trash—no thanks, I beg!
"Take the north gate,—for San Vitale's suburb,
"Whose double taxes you appealed against,
"In discomposure at your ill-success
"Is apt to stone you: there, there—only go!
"Beside, Eulalia here looks sleepily.
"Shake . . . oh, you hurt me, so you squeeze my wrist!"
—Is it not thus you 'll speak, adventurous friend?

[*As he opens the door,* LUITOLFO *rushes in, his garments disordered.*

Eulalia. Luitolfo! Blood?

Luitolfo. There 's more—and more of it!

Eulalia—take the garment! No—you, friend!
You take it and the blood from me—you dare!

Eulalia. Oh, who has hurt you? where 's the wound?

Chiappino. "Who," say you?
The man with many a touch of virtue yet!
The Provost's friend has proved too frank of speech,
And this comes of it. Miserable hound!
This comes of temporizing, as I said!
Here 's fruit of your smooth speeches and soft looks!
Now see my way! As God lives, I go straight
To the palace and do justice, once for all!

Luitolfo. What says he?

Chiappino. I 'll do justice on him.

Luitolfo. Him?

Chiappino. The Provost.

Luitolfo. I 've just killed him.

Eulalia. Oh, my God!

Luitolfo. My friend, they 're on my trace; they 'll have me—now!
They 're round him, busy with him: soon they 'll find
He 's past their help, and then they 'll be on me!
Chiappino, save Eulalia! I forget . . .
Were you not bound for . . .

Chiappino. Lugo?

Luitolfo. Ah—yes—yes!
That was the point I prayed of him to change.

Well, go—be happy! Is Eulalia safe?
They 're on me!

Chiappino. 'T is through me they reach you, then!
Friend, seem the man you are! Lock arms—that 's right!
Now tell me what you 've done; explain how you
That still professed forbearance, still preached peace,
Could bring yourself . . .

Luitolfo. What was peace for, Chiappino?
I tried peace: did that promise, when peace failed,
Strife should not follow? All my peaceful days
Were just the prelude to a day like this.
I cried "You call me 'friend': save my true friend!
"Save him, or lose me!"

Chiappino. But you never said
You meant to tell the Provost thus and thus.

Luitolfo. Why should I say it? What else did I mean?

Chiappino. Well? He persisted?

Luitolfo. —"Would so order it
"You should not trouble him too soon again."
I saw a meaning in his eye and lip;
I poured my heart's store of indignant words
Out on him: then—I know not! He retorted,
And I . . . some staff lay there to hand—I think
He bade his servants thrust me out—I struck . . .
Ah, they come! Fly you, save yourselves, you two!

The dead back-weight of the beheading axe!
The glowing trip-hook, thumbscrews and the gadge!
Eulalia. They do come! Torches in the Place!
Farewell,
Chiappino! You can work no good to us—
Much to yourself; believe not, all the world
Must needs be cursed henceforth!
Chiappino. And you?
Eulalia. I stay.
Chiappino. Ha, ha! Now, listen! I am master here!
This was my coarse disguise; this paper shows
My path of flight and place of refuge—see—
Lugo, Argenta, past San Nicolo,
Ferrara, then to Venice and all 's safe!
Put on the cloak! His people have to fetch
A compass round about. There 's time enough
Ere they can reach us, so you straightway make
For Lugo . . . nay, he hears not! On with it—
The cloak, Luitolfo, do you hear me? See—
He obeys he knows not how. Then, if I must—
Answer me! Do you know the Lugo gate?
Eulalia. The north-west gate, over the bridge?
Luitolfo. I know.
Chiappino. Well, there—you are not frightened? all my route
Is traced in that: at Venice you escape

Their power. Eulalia, I am master here!

[*Shouts from without. He pushes out* LUITOLFO, *who complies mechanically.*

In time! Nay, help me with him—so! He 's gone.

Eulalia. What have you done? On you, perchance, all know

The Provost's hater, will men's vengeance fall

As our accomplice.

Chiappino. Mere accomplice? See!

[*Putting on* LUITOLFO'S *vest.*

Now, lady, am I true to my profession,

Or one of these?

Eulalia. You take Luitolfo's place?

Chiappino. Die for him.

Eulalia. Well done! [*Shouts increase.*

Chiappino. How the people tarry!

I can't be silent; I must speak: or sing—

How natural to sing now!

Eulalia. Hush and pray!

We are to die; but even I perceive

'T is not a very hard thing so to die.

My cousin of the pale-blue tearful eyes,

Poor Cesca, suffers more from one day's life

With the stern husband; Tisbe's heart goes forth

Each evening after that wild son of hers,

To track his thoughtless footstep through the streets:

How easy for them both to die like this!
I am not sure that I could live as they.

Chiappino. Here they come, crowds! They pass the gate? Yes!—No!—
One torch is in the courtyard. Here flock all.

Eulalia. At least Luitolfo has escaped. What cries!

Chiappino. If they would drag one to the market-place,
One might speak there!

Eulalia. List, list!

Chiappino. They mount the steps.

Enter the Populace.

Chiappino. I killed the Provost!

The Populace [*speaking together*]. 'T was Chiappino, friends!
Our saviour! The best man at last as first!
He who first made us feel what chains we wore,
He also strikes the blow that shatters them,
He at last saves us—our best citizen!
—Oh, have you only courage to speak now?
My eldest son was christened a year since
"Cino" to keep Chiappino's name in mind—
Cino, for shortness merely, you observe!
The city 's in our hands. The guards are fled.
Do you, the cause of all, come down—come up—
Come out to counsel us, our chief, our king,

Whate'er rewards you! Choose your own reward!
The peril over, its reward begins!
Come and harangue us in the market-place!

Eulalia. Chiappino?

Chiappino. Yes—I understand your eyes!
You think I should have promptlier disowned
This deed with its strange unforeseen success,
In favour of Luitolfo. But the peril,
So far from ended, hardly seems begun.
To-morrow, rather, when a calm succeeds,
We easily shall make him full amends:
And meantime—if we save them as they pray,
And justify the deed by its effects?

Eulalia. You would, for worlds, you had denied at once.

Chiappino. I know my own intention, be assured!
All 's well. Precede us, fellow-citizens!

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The Market-place.* LUITOLFO *in disguise mingling with the* Populace *assembled opposite the* Provost's *Palace.*

1*st Bystander* [*to* LUITOLFO]. You, a friend of Luitolfo's? Then, your friend is vanished,—in all probability killed on the night that his patron the tyrannical Provost was loyally suppressed here, exactly a month ago, by our illustrious fellow-citizen, thrice-noble saviour, and new Provost that is like to be, this very morning,—Chiappino!

Luitolfo. He the new Provost?

2*nd Bystander.* Up those steps will he go, and beneath yonder pillar stand, while Ogniben, the Pope's Legate from Ravenna, reads the new dignitary's title to the people, according to established custom: for which reason, there is the assemblage you inquire about.

Luitolfo. Chiappino—the late Provost's successor? Impossible! But tell me of that presently. What I would know first of all is, wherefore Luitolfo must so necessarily have been killed on that memorable night?

3*rd Bystander.* You were Luitolfo's friend? So was I.

Never, if you will credit me, did there exist so poor-spirited a milksop. He, with all the opportunities in the world, furnished by daily converse with our oppressor, would not stir a finger to help us: and, when Chiappino rose in solitary majesty and . . . how does one go on saying? . . . dealt the godlike blow,—this Luitolfo, not unreasonably fearing the indignation of an aroused and liberated people, fled precipitately. He may have got trodden to death in the press at the south-east gate, when the Provost's guards fled through it to Ravenna, with their wounded master,—if he did not rather hang himself under some hedge.

Luitolfo. Or why not simply have lain perdue in some quiet corner,—such as San Cassiano, where his estate was,—receiving daily intelligence from some sure friend, meanwhile, as to the turn matters were taking here—how, for instance, the Provost was not dead, after all, only wounded—or, as to-day's news would seem to prove, how Chiappino was not Brutus the Elder, after all, only the new Provost—and thus Luitolfo be enabled to watch a favourable opportunity for returning? Might it not have been so?

3rd Bystander. Why, he may have taken that care of himself, certainly, for he came of a cautious stock. I 'll tell you how his uncle, just such another gingerly treader on tiptoes with finger on lip,—how he met his death in the

great plague-year: *dico vobis!* Hearing that the seventeenth house in a certain street was infected, he calculates to pass it in safety by taking plentiful breath, say, when he shall arrive at the eleventh house; then scouring by, holding that breath, till he be got so far on the other side as number twenty-three, and thus elude the danger.—And so did he begin; but, as he arrived at thirteen, we will say, —thinking to improve on his precaution by putting up a little prayer to St. Nepomucene of Prague, this exhausted so much of his lungs' reserve, that at sixteen it was clean spent,—consequently at the fatal seventeen he inhaled with a vigour and persistence enough to suck you any latent venom out of the heart of a stone—Ha, ha!

Luitolfo [*aside*]. (If I had not lent that man the money he wanted last spring, I should fear this bitterness was attributable to me.) Luitolfo is dead then, one may conclude?

3rd Bystander. Why, he had a house here, and a woman to whom he was affianced; and as they both pass naturally to the new Provost, his friend and heir . . .

Luitolfo. Ah, I suspected you of imposing on me with your pleasantry! I know Chiappino better.

1st Bystander. (Our friend has the bile! After all, I do not dislike finding somebody vary a little this general gape of admiration at Chiappino's glorious qualities.)

Pray, how much may you know of what has taken place in Faenza since that memorable night?

Luitolfo. It is most to the purpose, that I know Chiappino to have been by profession a hater of that very office of Provost, you now charge him with proposing to accept.

1*st Bystander.* Sir, I'll tell you. That night was indeed memorable. Up we rose, a mass of us, men, women, children; out fled the guards with the body of the tyrant; we were to defy the world: but, next grey morning, "What will Rome say?" began everybody. You know we are governed by Ravenna, which is governed by Rome. And quietly into the town, by the Ravenna road, comes on muleback a portly personage, Ogniben by name, with the quality of Pontifical Legate; trots briskly through the streets humming a "*Cur fremuere gentes,*" and makes directly for the Provost's Palace—there it faces you. "One Messer Chiappino is your leader? I have known three-and-twenty leaders of revolts!" (laughing gently to himself) "Give me the help of your arm from my mule to yonder steps under the pillar—So! And now, my revolters and good friends, what do you want? The guards burst into Ravenna last night bearing your wounded Provost; and, having had a little talk with him, I take on myself to come and try appease the disorderliness, before Rome, hearing of it, resort to another method: 't is I come, and not another, from a certain

love I confess to, of composing differences. So, do you understand, you are about to experience this unheard-of tyranny from me, that there shall be no heading nor hanging, no confiscation nor exile: I insist on your simply pleasing yourselves. And now, pray, what does please you? To live without any government at all? Or having decided for one, to see its minister murdered by the first of your body that chooses to find himself wronged, or disposed for reverting to first principles and a justice anterior to all institutions,—and so will you carry matters, that the rest of the world must at length unite and put down such a den of wild beasts? As for vengeance on what has just taken place,—once for all, the wounded man assures me he cannot conjecture who struck him; and this so earnestly, that one may be sure he knows perfectly well what intimate acquaintance could find admission to speak with him late last evening. I come not for vengeance therefore, but from pure curiosity to hear what you will do next." And thus he ran on, on, easily and volubly, till he seemed to arrive quite naturally at the praise of law, order, and paternal government by somebody from rather a distance. All our citizens were in the snare, and about to be friends with so congenial an adviser; but that Chiappino suddenly stood forth, spoke out indignantly, and set things right again.

Luitolfo. Do you see? I recognize him there!

3rd Bystander. Ay but, mark you, at the end of Chiappino's longest period in praise of a pure republic,—"And by whom do I desire such a government should be administered, perhaps, but by one like yourself?"—returns the Legate: thereupon speaking for a quarter of an hour together, on the natural and only legitimate government by the best and wisest. And it should seem there was soon discovered to be no such vast discrepancy at bottom between this and Chiappino's theory, place but each in its proper light. "Oh, are you there?" quoth Chiappino: "Ay, in that, I agree," returns Chiappino: and so on.

Luitolfo. But did Chiappino cede at once to this?

1st Bystander. Why, not altogether at once. For instance, he said that the difference between him and all his fellows was, that they seemed all wishing to be kings in one or another way,—"whereas what right," asked he, "has any man to wish to be superior to another?"—whereat, "Ah, sir," answers the Legate, "this is the death of me, so often as I expect something is really going to be revealed to us by you clearer-seers, deeper-thinkers—this—that your right-hand (to speak by a figure) should be found taking up the weapon it displayed so ostentatiously, not to destroy any dragon in our path, as was prophesied, but simply to cut off its own fellow left-hand: yourself set about attacking yourself. For see

now! Here are you who, I make sure, glory exceedingly in knowing the noble nature of the soul, its divine impulses, and so forth; and with such a knowledge you stand, as it were, armed to encounter the natural doubts and fears as to that same inherent nobility, which are apt to waylay us, the weaker ones, in the road of life. And when we look eagerly to see them fall before you, lo, round you wheel, only the left-hand gets the blow; one proof of the soul's nobility destroys simply another proof, quite as good, of the same, for you are found delivering an opinion like this! Why, what is this perpetual yearning to exceed, to subdue, to be better than, and a king over, one's fellows,—all that you so disclaim, —but the very tendency yourself are most proud of, and under another form, would oppose to it, —only in a lower stage of manifestation? You don't want to be vulgarly superior to your fellows after their poor fashion—to have me hold solemnly up your gown's tail, or hand you an express of the last importance from the Pope, with all these bystanders noticing how unconcerned you look the while: but neither does our gaping friend, the burgess yonder, want the other kind of kingship, that consists in understanding better than his fellows this and similar points of human nature, nor to roll under his tongue this sweeter morsel still,—the feeling that, through immense philosophy, he does *not* feel, he rather thinks, above

you and me!" And so chatting, they glided off arm-in-arm.

Luitolfo. And the result is . . .

1*st Bystander.* Why that, a month having gone by, the indomitable Chiappino, marrying as he will Luitolfo's love—at all events succeeding to Luitolfo's wealth—becomes the first inhabitant of Faenza, and a proper aspirant to the Provostship; which we assemble here to see conferred on him this morning. The Legate's Guard to clear the way! He will follow presently.

Luitolfo [*withdrawing a little*]. I understand the drift of Eulalia's communications less than ever. Yet she surely said, in so many words, that Chiappino was in urgent danger: wherefore, disregarding her injunction to continue in my retreat and await the result of—what she called, some experiment yet in process—I hastened here without her leave or knowledge: how could I else? But if this they say be true—if it were for such a purpose, she and Chiappino kept me away . . . Oh, no, no! I must confront him and her before I believe this of them. And at the word, see!

Enter CHIAPPINO *and* EULALIA.

Eulalia. We part here, then? The change in your principles would seem to be complete.

Chiappino. Now, why refuse to see that in my present

course I change no principles, only re-adapt them and more adroitly? I had despaired of, what you may call the material instrumentality of life; of ever being able to rightly operate on mankind through such a deranged machinery as the existing modes of government: but now, if I suddenly discover how to inform these perverted institutions with fresh purpose, bring the functionary limbs once more into immediate communication with, and subjection to, the soul I am about to bestow on them—do you see? Why should one desire to invent, as long as it remains possible to renew and transform? When all further hope of the old organization shall be extinct, then, I grant you, it may be time to try and create another.

Eulalia. And there being discoverable some hope yet in the hitherto much-abused old system of absolute government by a Provost here, you mean to take your time about endeavouring to realize those visions of a perfect State, we once heard of?

Chiappino. Say, I would fain realize my conception of a palace, for instance, and that there is, abstractedly, but a single way of erecting one perfectly. Here, in the market-place is my allotted building-ground; here I stand without a stone to lay, or a labourer to help me,—stand, too, during a short day of life, close on which the night comes. On the other hand, circumstances sud-

denly offer me (turn and see it!) the old Provost's house to experiment upon—ruinous, if you please, wrongly constructed at the beginning, and ready to tumble now. But materials abound, a crowd of workmen offer their services; here, exists yet a Hall of Audience of originally noble proportions, there a Guest-chamber of symmetrical design enough: and I may restore, enlarge, abolish or unite these to heart's content. Ought I not make the best of such an opportunity, rather than continue to gaze disconsolately with folded arms on the flat pavement here, while the sun goes slowly down, never to rise again? Since you cannot understand this nor me, it is better we should part as you desire.

Eulalia. So, the love breaks away too!

Chiappino. No, rather my soul's capacity for love widens —needs more than one object to content it,—and, being better instructed, will not persist in seeing all the component parts of love in what is only a single part, —nor in finding that so many and so various loves are all united in the love of a woman,—manifold uses in one instrument, as the savage has his sword, staff, sceptre and idol, all in one club-stick. Love is a very compound thing. The intellectual part of my love I shall give to men, the mighty dead or the illustrious living; and determine to call a mere sensual instinct by as few fine names as possible. What do I lose?

Eulalia. Nay, I only think, what do I lose? and, one more word — which shall complete my instruction — does friendship go too? What of Luitolfo, the author of your present prosperity?

Chiappino. How the author?

Eulalia. That blow now called yours . . .

Chiappino. Struck without principle or purpose, as by a blind natural operation: yet to which all my thought and life directly and advisedly tended. I would have struck it, and could not: he would have done his utmost to avoid striking it, yet did so. I dispute his right to that deed of mine—a final action with him, from the first effect of which he fled away,—a mere first step with me, on which I base a whole mighty superstructure of good to follow. Could he get good from it?

Eulalia. So we profess, so we perform!

Enter OGNIBEN. EULALIA *stands apart.*

Ogniben. I have seen three-and-twenty leaders of revolts. By your leave, sir! Perform? What does the lady say of performing?

Chiappino. Only the trite saying, that we must not trust profession, only performance.

Ogniben. She 'll not say that, sir, when she knows you longer; you 'll instruct her better. Ever judge of men

by their professions! For though the bright moment of promising is but a moment and cannot be prolonged, yet, if sincere in its moment's extravagant goodness, why, trust it and know the man by it, I say—not by his performance; which is half the world's work, interfere as the world needs must, with its accidents and circumstances: the profession was purely the man's own. I judge people by what they might be,—not are, nor will be.

Chiappino. But have there not been found, too, performing natures, not merely promising?

Ogniben. Plenty. Little Bindo of our town, for instance, promised his friend, great ugly Masaccio, once, "I will repay you!"—for a favour done him. So, when his father came to die, and Bindo succeeded to the inheritance, he sends straightway for Masaccio and shares all with him—gives him half the land, half the money, half the kegs of wine in the cellar. "Good," say you: and it is good. But had little Bindo found himself possessor of all this wealth some five years before—on the happy night when Masaccio procured him that interview in the garden with his pretty cousin Lisa—instead of being the beggar he then was,—I am bound to believe that in the warm moment of promise he would have given away all the wine-kegs and all the money and all the land, and only reserved to himself

some hut on a hill-top hard by, whence he might spend his life in looking and seeing his friend enjoy himself: he meant fully that much, but the world interfered. — To our business! Did I understand you just now within-doors? You are not going to marry your old friend's love, after all?

Chiappino. I must have a woman that can sympathize with, and appreciate me, I told you.

Ogniben. Oh, I remember! you, the greater nature, needs must have a lesser one (—avowedly lesser—contest with you on that score would never do)—such a nature must comprehend you, as the phrase is, accompany and testify of your greatness from point to point onward. Why, that were being not merely as great as yourself, but greater considerably! Meantime, might not the more bounded nature as reasonably count on your appreciation of it, rather?—on your keeping close by it, so far as you both go together, and then going on by yourself as far as you please? Thus God serves us.

Chiappino. And yet a woman that could understand the whole of me, to whom I could reveal alike the strength and the weakness—

Ogniben. Ah, my friend, wish for nothing so foolish! Worship your love, give her the best of you to see; be to her like the western lands (they bring us such strange news of) to the Spanish Court; send her only

your lumps of gold, fans of feathers, your spirit-like birds, and fruits and gems! So shall you, what is unseen of you, be supposed altogether a paradise by her,—as these western lands by Spain: though I warrant there is filth, red baboons, ugly reptiles and squalor enough, which they bring Spain as few samples of as possible. Do you want your mistress to respect your body generally? Offer her your mouth to kiss: don't strip off your boot and put your foot to her lips! You understand my humour by this time? I help men to carry out their own principles: if they please to say two and two make five, I assent, so they will but go on and say, four and four make ten.

Chiappino. But these are my private affairs; what I desire you to occupy yourself about, is my public appearance presently: for when the people hear that I am appointed Provost, though you and I may thoroughly discern—and easily, too—the right principle at bottom of such a movement, and how my republicanism remains thoroughly unaltered, only takes a form of expression hitherto commonly judged (and heretofore by myself) incompatible with its existence,—when thus I reconcile myself to an old form of government instead of proposing a new one . . .

Ogniben. Why, you must deal with people broadly. Begin at a distance from this matter and say,—New

truths, old truths! sirs, there is nothing new possible to be revealed to us in the moral world; we know all we shall ever know: and it is for simply reminding us, by their various respective expedients, how we do know this and the other matter, that men get called prophets, poets and the like. A philosopher's life is spent in discovering that, of the half-dozen truths he knew when a child, such an one is a lie, as the world states it in set terms; and then, after a weary lapse of years, and plenty of hard-thinking, it becomes a truth again after all, as he happens to newly consider it and view it in a different relation with the others: and so he restates it, to the confusion of somebody else in good time. As for adding to the original stock of truths,—impossible! Thus, you see the expression of them is the grand business:—you have got a truth in your head about the right way of governing people, and you took a mode of expressing it which now you confess to be imperfect. But what then? There is truth in falsehood, falsehood in truth. No man ever told one great truth, that I know, without the help of a good dozen of lies at least, generally unconscious ones. And as when a child comes in breathlessly and relates a strange story, you try to conjecture from the very falsities in it, what the reality was,—do not conclude that he saw nothing in the sky, because he assuredly did not see a flying horse there as he says,—so, through the contradictory

expression, do you see, men should look painfully for, and trust to arrive eventually at, what you call the true principle at bottom. Ah, what an answer is there! to what will it not prove applicable?—"Contradictions? Of course there were," say you!

Chiappino. Still, the world at large may call it inconsistency, and what shall I urge in reply?

Ogniben. Why, look you, when they tax you with tergiversation or duplicity, you may answer—you begin to perceive that, when all 's done and said, both great parties in the State, the advocators of change in the present system of things, and the opponents of it, patriot and anti-patriot, are found working together for the common good; and that in the midst of their efforts for and against its progress, the world somehow or other still advances: to which result they contribute in equal proportions, those who spend their life in pushing it onward, as those who give theirs to the business of pulling it back. Now, if you found the world stand still between the opposite forces, and were glad, I should conceive you: but it steadily advances, you rejoice to see! By the side of such a rejoicer, the man who only winks as he keeps cunning and quiet, and says, "Let yonder hot-headed fellow fight out my battle! I, for one, shall win in the end by the blows he gives, and which I ought to be giving"—even he seems graceful in his

avowal, when one considers that he might say, "I shall win quite as much by the blows our antagonist gives him, blows from which he saves me—I thank the antagonist equally!" Moreover, you may enlarge on the loss of the edge of party-animosity with age and experience . . .

Chiappino. And naturally time must wear off such asperities: the bitterest adversaries get to discover certain points of similarity between each other, common sympathies—do they not?

Ogniben. Ay, had the young David but sat first to dine on his cheeses with the Philistine, he had soon discovered an abundance of such common sympathies. He of Gath, it is recorded, was born of a father and mother, had brothers and sisters like another man,—they, no more than the sons of Jesse, were used to eat each other. But, for the sake of one broad antipathy that had existed from the beginning, David slung the stone, cut off the giant's head, made a spoil of it, and after ate his cheeses alone, with the better appetite, for all I can learn. My friend, as you, with a quickened eye-sight, go on discovering much good on the worse side, remember that the same process should proportionably magnify and demonstrate to you the much more good on the better side! And when I profess no sympathy for the Goliaths of our time, and you object that a large nature should sympathize with every form of intelligence, and see the good in it, how-

ever limited—I answer, "So I do; but preserve the proportions of my sympathy, however finelier or widelier I may extend its action." I desire to be able, with a quickened eye-sight, to descry beauty in corruption where others see foulness only: but I hope I shall also continue to see a redoubled beauty in the higher forms of matter, where already everybody sees no foulness at all. I must retain, too, my old power of selection, and choice of appropriation, to apply to such new gifts; else they only dazzle instead of enlightening me. God has his archangels and consorts with them: though he made too, and intimately sees what is good in, the worm. Observe, I speak only as you profess to think and, so, ought to speak: I do justice to your own principles, that is all.

Chiappino. But you very well know that the two parties do, on occasion, assume each other's characteristics. What more disgusting, for instance, than to see how promptly the newly emancipated slave will adopt, in his own favour, the very measures of precaution, which pressed soreliest on himself as institutions of the tyranny he has just escaped from? Do the classes, hitherto without opinion, get leave to express it? there follows a confederacy immediately, from which—exercise your individual right and dissent, and woe be to you!

Ogniben. And a journey over the sea to you! That is the generous way. Cry—"Emancipated slaves, the first

excess, and off I go!" The first time a poor devil, who has been bastinadoed steadily his whole life long, finds himself let alone and able to legislate, so, begins pettishly, while he rubs his soles, "Woe be to whoever brings anything in the shape of a stick this way!"—you, rather than give up the very innocent pleasure of carrying one to switch flies with,—you go away, to everybody's sorrow. Yet you were quite reconciled to staying at home while the governors used to pass, every now and then, some such edict as "Let no man indulge in owning a stick which is not thick enough to chastise our slaves, if need require!" Well, there are pre-ordained hierarchies among us, and a profane vulgar subjected to a different law altogether; yet I am rather sorry you should see it so clearly: for, do you know what is to—all but save you at the Day of Judgment, all you men of genius? It is this: that, while you generally began by pulling down God, and went on to the end of your life, in one effort at setting up your own genius in his place,—still, the last, bitterest concession wrung with the utmost unwillingness from the experience of the very loftiest of you, was invariably—would one think it?—that the rest of mankind, down to the lowest of the mass, stood not, nor ever could stand, just on a level and equality with yourselves. That will be a point in the favour of all such, I hope and believe.

Chiappino. Why, men of genius are usually charged,

I think, with doing just the reverse; and at once acknowledging the natural inequality of mankind, by themselves participating in the universal craving after, and deference to, the civil distinctions which represent it. You wonder they pay such undue respect to titles and badges of superior rank.

Ogniben. Not I (always on your own ground and showing, be it noted!) Who doubts that, with a weapon to brandish, a man is the more formidable? Titles and badges are exercised as such a weapon, to which you and I look up wistfully. We could pin lions with it moreover, while in its present owner's hands it hardly prods rats. Nay, better than a mere weapon of easy mastery and obvious use, it is a mysterious divining rod that may serve us in undreamed-of ways. Beauty, strength, intellect—men often have none of these, and yet conceive pretty accurately what kind of advantages they would bestow on the possessor. We know at least what it is we make up our mind to forego, and so can apply the fittest substitute in our power. Wanting beauty, we cultivate good humour; missing wit, we get riches: but the mystic unimaginable operation of that gold collar and string of Latin names which suddenly turned poor stupid little peevish Cecco of our town into natural lord of the best of us—a Duke, he is now—there indeed is a virtue to be reverenced!

Chiappino. Ay, by the vulgar: not by Messere Stiatta the poet, who pays more assiduous court to him than anybody.

Ogniben. What else should Stiatta pay court to? He has talent, not honour and riches: men naturally covet what they have not.

Chiappino. No, or Cecco would covet talent, which he has not, whereas he covets more riches, of which he has plenty, already.

Ogniben. Because a purse added to a purse makes the holder twice as rich: but just such another talent as Stiatta's, added to what he now possesses, what would that profit him? Give the talent a purse indeed, to do something with! But lo, how we keep the good people waiting! I only desired to do justice to the noble sentiments which animate you, and which you are too modest to duly enforce. Come, to our main business: shall we ascend the steps? I am going to propose you for Provost to the people; they know your antecedents, and will accept you with a joyful unanimity: whereon I confirm their choice. Rouse up! Are you nerving yourself to an effort? Beware the disaster of Messere Stiatta we were talking of! who, determining to keep an equal mind and constant face on whatever might be the fortune of his last new poem with our townsmen, heard too plainly "hiss, hiss, hiss," increase every moment. Till

at last the man fell senseless: not perceiving that the portentous sounds had all the while been issuing from between his own nobly clenched teeth, and nostrils narrowed by resolve.

Chiappino. Do you begin to throw off the mask?—to jest with me, having got me effectually into your trap?

Ogniben. Where is the trap, my friend? You hear what I engage to do, for my part: you, for yours, have only to fulfil your promise made just now within doors, of professing unlimited obedience to Rome's authority in my person. And I shall authorize no more than the simple re-establishment of the Provostship and the conferment of its privileges upon yourself: the only novel stipulation being a birth of the peculiar circumstances of the time.

Chiappino. And that stipulation?

Ogniben. Just the obvious one—that in the event of the discovery of the actual assailant of the late Provost . . .

Chiappino. Ha!

Ogniben. Why, he shall suffer the proper penalty, of course; what did you expect?

Chiappino. Who heard of this?

Ogniben. Rather, who needed to hear of this?

Chiappino. Can it be, the popular rumour never reached you . . .

Ogniben. Many more such rumours reach me, friend,

than I choose to receive; those which wait longest have best chance. Has the present one sufficiently waited? Now is its time for entry with effect. See the good people crowding about yonder palace-steps—which we may not have to ascend, after all. My good friends! (nay, two or three of you will answer every purpose)—who was it fell upon and proved nearly the death of your late Provost? His successor desires to hear, that his day of inauguration may be graced by the act of prompt bare justice we all anticipate. Who dealt the blow that night, does anybody know?

Luitolfo [*coming forward*]. I!

All. Luitolfo!

Luitolfo. I avow the deed, justify and approve it, and stand forth now, to relieve my friend of an unearned responsibility. Having taken thought, I am grown stronger: I shall shrink from nothing that awaits me. Nay, Chiappino—we are friends still: I dare say there is some proof of your superior nature in this starting aside, strange as it seemed at first. So, they tell me, my horse is of the right stock, because a shadow in the path frightens him into a frenzy, makes him dash my brains out. I understand only the dull mule's way of standing stockishly, plodding soberly, suffering on occasion a blow or two with due patience.

Eulalia. I was determined to justify my choice,

Chiappino,—to let Luitolfo's nature vindicate itself. Henceforth we are undivided, whatever be our fortune.

Ogniben. Now, in these last ten minutes of silence, what have I been doing, deem you? Putting the finishing stroke to a homily of mine, I have long taken thought to perfect, on the text, "Let whoso thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." To your house, Luitolfo! Still silent, my patriotic friend? Well, that is a good sign however. And you will go aside for a time? That is better still. I understand: it would be easy for you to die of remorse here on the spot and shock us all, but you mean to live and grow worthy of coming back to us one day. There, I will tell everybody; and you only do right to believe you must get better as you get older. All men do so: they are worst in childhood, improve in manhood, and get ready in old age for another world. Youth, with its beauty and grace, would seem bestowed on us for some such reason as to make us partly endurable till we have time for really becoming so of ourselves, without their aid; when they leave us. The sweetest child we all smile on for his pleasant want of the whole world to break up, or suck in his mouth, seeing no other good in it—would be rudely handled by that world's inhabitants, if he retained those angelic infantine desires when he had grown six feet high, black and bearded. But, little by little, he sees fit to forego claim after claim on the world,

puts up with a less and less share of its good as his proper portion; and when the octogenarian asks barely a sup of gruel and a fire of dry sticks, and thanks you as for his full allowance and right in the common good of life,—hoping nobody may murder him,—he who began by asking and expecting the whole of us to bow down in worship to him,—why, I say he is advanced, far onward, very far, nearly out of sight like our friend Chiappino yonder. And now—(ay, good-bye to you! He turns round the north-west gate: going to Lugo again? Good-bye!)—and now give thanks to God, the keys of the Provost's palace to me, and yourselves to profitable meditation at home! I have known *Four*-and-twenty leaders of revolts.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME

THE POETICAL WORKS

of

ROBERT BROWNING

VOL. IV.

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON
COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY
MEN AND WOMEN

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A

BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON;

A TRAGEDY.

PERSONS.

MILDRED TRESHAM.
GUENDOLEN TRESHAM.
THOROLD, Earl Tresham.
AUSTIN TRESHAM.
HENRY, Earl Mertoun.
GERARD, *and other retainers of* Lord Tresham.

TIME, 17—.

A

BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON.

1843.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The interior of a lodge in* LORD TRESHAM'S *park. Many* Retainers *crowded at the window, supposed to command a view of the entrance to his mansion.* GERARD, *the warrener, his back to a table on which are flagons, etc.*

1*st Retainer.* Ay, do! push, friends, and then you 'll
push down me!
—What for? Does any hear a runner's foot
Or a steed's trample or a coach-wheel's cry?
Is the Earl come or his least poursuivant?
But there 's no breeding in a man of you
Save Gerard yonder: here 's a half-place yet,
Old Gerard!

Gerard. Save your courtesies, my friend.
Here is my place.

2nd Retainer. Now, Gerard, out with it!
What makes you sullen, this of all the days
I' the year? To-day that young rich bountiful
Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they match
With our Lord Tresham through the country-side,
Is coming here in utmost bravery
To ask our master's sister's hand?

Gerard. What then?

2nd Retainer. What then? Why, you, she speaks to, if she meets
Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart
The boughs to let her through her forest walks,
You, always favourite for your no-deserts,
You 've heard, these three days, how Earl Mertoun sues
To lay his heart and house and broad lands too
At Lady Mildred's feet: and while we squeeze
Ourselves into a mousehole lest we miss
One congee of the least page in his train,
You sit o' one side—"there 's the Earl," say I—
"What then?" say you!

3rd Retainer. I 'll wager he has let
Both swans he tamed for Lady Mildred swim
Over the falls and gain the river!

Gerard. Ralph,
Is not to-morrow my inspecting-day
For you and for your hawks?

4th Retainer. Let Gerard be!
He 's coarse-grained, like his carved black cross-bow stock.
Ha, look now, while we squabble with him, look!
Well done, now—is not this beginning, now,
To purpose?

1st Retainer. Our retainers look as fine—
That 's comfort. Lord, how Richard holds himself
With his white staff! Will not a knave behind
Prick him upright?

4th Retainer. He 's only bowing, fool!
The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.

1st Retainer. That 's comfort. Here 's a very cavalcade!

3rd Retainer. I don't see wherefore Richard, and his troop
Of silk and silver varlets there, should find
Their perfumed selves so indispensable
On high days, holidays! Would it so disgrace
Our family, if I, for instance, stood—
In my right hand a cast of Swedish hawks,
A leash of greyhounds in my left?—

Gerard. —With Hugh
The logman for supporter, in his right
The bill-hook, in his left the brushwood-shears!

3rd Retainer. Out on you, crab! What next, what next? The Earl!

1st Retainer. Oh Walter, groom, our horses, do they match
The Earl's? Alas, that first pair of the six—
They paw the ground—Ah Walter! and that brute
Just on his haunches by the wheel!
6th Retainer. Ay—ay!
You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,
At soups and sauces: what 's a horse to you?
D' ye mark that beast they 've slid into the midst
So cunningly?—then, Philip, mark this further;
No leg has he to stand on!
1st Retainer. No? That 's comfort.
2nd Retainer. Peace, Cook! The Earl descends. Well, Gerard, see
The Earl at least! Come, there 's a proper man,
I hope! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole or Swede.
Has got a starrier eye.
3rd Retainer. His eyes are blue:
But leave my hawks alone!
4th Retainer. So young, and yet
So tall and shapely!
5th Retainer. Here 's Lord Tresham's self!
There now—there 's what a nobleman should be!
He 's older, graver, loftier, he 's more like
A House's head.
2nd Retainer. But you 'd not have a boy

—And what 's the Earl beside?—possess too soon
That stateliness?

1st Retainer. Our master takes his hand—
Richard and his white staff are on the move—
Back fall our people—(tsh!—there 's Timothy
Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties,
And Peter's cursed rosette 's a-coming off!)
—At last I see our lord's back and his friend's;
And the whole beautiful bright company
Close round them—in they go! [*Jumping down from the window-bench, and making for the table and its jugs.*] Good health, long life,
Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his House!

6th Retainer. My father drove his father first to court,
After his marriage-day—ay, did he!

2nd Retainer. God bless
Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the Earl!
Here, Gerard, reach your beaker!

Gerard. Drink, my boys!
Don't mind me—all 's not right about me—drink!

2nd Retainer [*aside*]. He 's vexed, now, that he let the show escape!

[*To* GERARD.] Remember that the Earl returns this way.

Gerard. That way?

2nd Retainer. Just so.

Gerard. Then my way 's here. [*Goes.*

2nd Retainer. Old Gerard
Will die soon—mind, I said it! He was used
To care about the pitifullest thing
That touched the House's honour, not an eye
But his could see wherein: and on a cause
Of scarce a quarter this importance, Gerard
Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away
In cares that this was right, nor that was wrong,
Such point decorous, and such square by rule—
He knew such niceties, no herald more:
And now—you see his humour: die he will!

2nd Retainer. God help him! Who 's for the great servants'-hall
To hear what 's going on inside? They 'd follow
Lord Tresham into the saloon.

3rd Retainer. I!—

4th Retainer. I!—
Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door,
Some hint of how the parley goes inside!
Prosperity to the great House once more!
Here 's the last drop!

1st Retainer. Have at you! Boys, hurrah!

SCENE II.—*A Saloon in the Mansion.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM, LORD MERTOUN, AUSTIN, *and* GUENDOLEN.

Tresham. I welcome you, Lord Mertoun, yet once more,
To this ancestral roof of mine. Your name
—Noble among the noblest in itself,
Yet taking in your person, fame avers,
New price and lustre,—(as that gem you wear,
Transmitted from a hundred knightly breasts,
Fresh chased and set and fixed by its last lord,
Seems to re-kindle at the core)—your name
Would win you welcome!—

Mertoun. Thanks!

Tresham. —But add to that.
The worthiness and grace and dignity
Of your proposal for uniting both
Our Houses even closer than respect
Unites them now—add these, and you must grant
One favour more, nor that the least,—to think
The welcome I should give;—'t is given! My lord,
My only brother, Austin: he 's the king's.
Our cousin, Lady Guendolen—betrothed
To Austin: all are yours.

Mertoun. I thank you—less
For the expressed commendings which your seal,
And only that, authenticates—forbids
My putting from me . . . to my heart I take
Your praise . . . but praise less claims my gratitude,
Than the indulgent insight it implies
Of what must needs be uppermost with one
Who comes, like me, with the bare leave to ask,
In weighed and measured unimpassioned words,
A gift, which, if as calmly 't is denied,
He must withdraw, content upon his cheek,
Despair within his soul. That I dare ask
Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence
That gift, I have to thank you. Yes, Lord Tresham,
I love your sister—as you 'd have one love
That lady . . . oh more, more I love her! Wealth,
Rank, all the world thinks me, they 're yours, you know,
To hold or part with, at your choice—but grant
My true self, me without a rood of land,
A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,
Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death or life?

Guendolen [*apart to* AUSTIN]. Why, this is loving, Austin!

Austin. He 's so young!

Guendolen. Young? Old enough, I think, to half surmise

He never had obtained an entrance here,
Were all this fear and trembling needed.
Austin. Hush!
He reddens.
Guendolen. Mark him, Austin that 's true love!
Ours must begin again.
Tresham. We 'll sit, my lord.
Ever with best desert goes diffidence.
I may speak plainly nor be misconceived.
That I am wholly satisfied with you
On this occasion, when a falcon's eye
Were dull compared with mine to search out faults,
Is somewhat. Mildred's hand is hers to give
Or to refuse.
Mertoun. But you, you grant my suit?
I have your word if hers?
Tresham. My best of words
If hers encourage you. I trust it will.
Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way?
Mertoun. I . . . I . . . our two demesnes, remember, touch;
I have been used to wander carelessly
After my stricken game: the heron roused
Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken wing
Thro' thicks and glades a mile in yours,—or else
Some eyass ill-reclaimed has taken flight

And lured me after her from tree to tree,
I marked not whither. I have come upon
The lady's wondrous beauty unaware,
And—and then . . . I have seen her.

Guendolen [*aside to* AUSTIN]. Note that mode
Of faltering out that, when a lady passed,
He, having eyes, did see her! You had said—
"On such a day I scanned her, head to foot;
"Observed a red, where red should not have been,
"Outside her elbow; but was pleased enough
"Upon the whole." Let such irreverent talk
Be lessoned for the future!

Tresham. What 's to say
May be said briefly. She has never known
A mother's care; I stand for father too.
Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems—
You cannot know the good and tender heart,
Its girl's trust and its woman's constancy,
How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,
How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free
As light where friends are—how imbued with lore
The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet
The . . . one might know I talked of Mildred—thus
We brothers talk!

Mertoun. I thank you.

Tresham. In a word,

Control 's not for this lady; but her wish
To please me outstrips in its subtlety
My power of being pleased: herself creates
The want she means to satisfy. My heart
Prefers your suit to her as 't were its own.
Can I say more?

Mertoun. No more—thanks, thanks—no more!

Tresham. This matter then discussed . . .

Mertoun. —We 'll waste no breath
On aught less precious. I 'm beneath the roof
Which holds her: while I thought of that, my speech
To you would wander—as it must not do,
Since as you favour me I stand or fall.
I pray you suffer that I take my leave!

Tresham. With less regret 't is suffered, that again
We meet, I hope, so shortly.

Mertoun. We? again?—
Ah yes, forgive me—when shall . . . you will crown
Your goodness by forthwith apprising me
When . . . if . . . the lady will appoint a day
For me to wait on you—and her.

Tresham. So soon
As I am made acquainted with her thoughts
On your proposal—howsoe'er they lean—
A messenger shall bring you the result.

Mertoun. You cannot bind me more to you, my lord.

Farewell till we renew . . . I trust, renew
A converse ne'er to disunite again.
Tresham. So may it prove!
Mertoun. You, lady, you, sir, take
My humble salutation!
Guendolen and Austin. Thanks!
Tresham. Within there!
[Servants *enter.* TRESHAM *conducts* MERTOUN *to the door. Meantime* AUSTIN *remarks,*
Well,
Here I have an advantage of the Earl,
Confess now! I 'd not think that all was safe
Because my lady's brother stood my friend!
Why, he makes sure of her—" do you say, yes—
" She 'll not say, no,"—what comes it to beside?
I should have prayed the brother, " speak this speech,
" For Heaven's sake urge this on her—put in this—
" Forget not, as you 'd save me, t' other thing,—
" Then set down what she says, and how she looks,
" And if she smiles, and" (in an under breath)
" Only let her accept me, and do you
" And all the world refuse me, if you dare!"
Guendolen. That way you 'd take, friend Austin?
What a shame
I was your cousin, tamely from the first
Your bride, and all this fervour 's run to waste!

Do you know you speak sensibly to-day?
The Earl 's a fool.

Austin. Here 's Thorold. Tell him so!

Tresham [*returning*]. Now, voices, voices! 'St! the lady 's first!

How seems he?—seems he not . . . come, faith give fraud
The mercy-stroke whenever they engage!
Down with fraud, up with faith! How seems the Earl?
A name! a blazon! if you knew their worth,
As you will never! come—the Earl?

Guendolen. He 's young.

Tresham. What 's she? an infant save in heart and brain.

Young! Mildred is fourteen, remark! And you . . .
Austin, how old is she?

Guendolen. There 's tact for you!

I meant that being young was good excuse
If one should tax him . . .

Tresham. Well?

Guendolen. —With lacking wit.

Tresham. He lacked wit? Where might he lack wit, so please you?

Guendolen. In standing straighter than the steward's rod
And making you the tiresomest harangue,
Instead of slipping over to my side

And softly whispering in my ear, "Sweet lady,
" Your cousin there will do me detriment
" He little dreams of: he 's absorbed, I see,
" In my old name and fame—be sure he 'll leave
" My Mildred, when his best account of me
" Is ended, in full confidence I wear
" My grandsire's periwig down either cheek.
" I 'm lost unless your gentleness vouchsafes" . . .

Tresham. . . . " To give a best of best accounts, yourself,
" Of me and my demerits." You are right!
He should have said what now I say for him.
Yon golden creature, will you help us all?
Here 's Austin means to vouch for much, but you
—You are . . . what Austin only knows! Come up,
All three of us: she 's in the library
No doubt, for the day 's wearing fast. Precede!

Guendolen. Austin, how we must—!

Tresham. Must what? Must speak truth,
Malignant tongue! Detect one fault in him!
I challenge you!

Guendolen. Witchcraft 's a fault in him,
For you 're bewitched.

Tresham. What 's urgent we obtain
Is, that she soon receive him—say, to-morrow—
Next day at furthest.

Guendolen. Ne'er instruct me!
Tresham. Come!
—He 's out of your good graces, since forsooth,
He stood not as he 'd carry us by storm
With his perfections! You 're for the composed
Manly assured becoming confidence!
—Get her to say, "to-morrow," and I 'll give you . . .
I 'll give you black Urganda, to be spoiled
With petting and snail-paces. Will you? Come!

SCENE III.—MILDRED'S *chamber. A painted window overlooks the park.* MILDRED *and* GUENDOLEN.

Guendolen. Now, Mildred, spare those pains. I have not left
Our talkers in the library, and climbed
The wearisome ascent to this your bower
In company with you,—I have not dared . . .
Nay, worked such prodigies as sparing you
Lord Mertoun's pedigree before the flood,
Which Thorold seemed in very act to tell
—Or bringing Austin to pluck up that most
Firm-rooted heresy—your suitor's eyes,
He would maintain, were grey instead of blue—
I think I brought him to contrition!—Well,

I have not done such things, (all to deserve
A minute's quiet cousin's talk with you,)
To be dismissed so coolly.

Mildred. Guendolen!

What have I done? what could suggest . . .

Guendolen. There, there!

Do I not comprehend you 'd be alone
To throw those testimonies in a heap,
Thorold's enlargings, Austin's brevities,
With that poor silly heartless Guendolen's
Ill-timed misplaced attempted smartnesses—
And sift their sense out? now, I come to spare you
Nearly a whole night's labour. Ask and have!
Demand, be answered! Lack I ears and eyes?
Am I perplexed which side of the rock-table
The Conqueror dined on when he landed first,
Lord Mertoun's ancestor was bidden take—
The bow-hand or the arrow-hand's great meed?
Mildred, the Earl has soft blue eyes!

Mildred. My brother—

Did he . . . you said that he received him well?

Guendolen. If I said only "well" I said not much.

Oh, stay—which brother?

Mildred. Thorold! who—who else?

Guendolen. Thorold (a secret) is too proud by half,—
Nay, hear me out—with us he 's even gentler

Than we are with our birds. Of this great House
The least retainer that e'er caught his glance
Would die for him, real dying—no mere talk:
And in the world, the court, if men would cite
The perfect spirit of honour, Thorold's name
Rises of its clear nature to their lips.
But he should take men's homage, trust in it,
And care no more about what drew it down.
He has desert, and that, acknowledgment;
Is he content?

Mildred. You wrong him, Guendolen.

Guendolen. He 's proud, confess; so proud with brooding o'er
The light of his interminable line,
An ancestry with men all paladins,
And women all . . .

Mildred. Dear Guendolen, 't is late!
When yonder purple pane the climbing moon
Pierces, I know 't is midnight.

Guendolen. Well, that Thorold
Should rise up from such musings, and receive
One come audaciously to graft himself
Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw,
No slightest spot in such an one . . .

Mildred. Who finds
A spot in Mertoun?

Guendolen. Not your brother · therefore,
Not the whole world.

Mildred. I am weary, Guendolen.
Bear with me!

Guendolen. I am foolish.

Mildred. Oh no, kind!
But I would rest.

Guendolen. Good night and rest to you!
I said how gracefully his mantle lay
Beneath the rings of his light hair?

Mildred. Brown hair.

Guendolen. Brown? why, it *is* brown: how could you know that?

Mildred. How? did not you—Oh, Austin 't was, declared
His hair was light, not brown—my head!—and look,
The moon-beam purpling the dark chamber! Sweet,
Good night!

Guendolen. Forgive me—sleep the soundlier for me!
[*Going, she turns suddenly.*
Mildred!
Perdition! all 's discovered! Thorold finds
—That the Earl's greatest of all grandmothers
Was grander daughter still—to that fair dame
Whose garter slipped down at the famous dance! [*Goes.*

Mildred. Is she—can she be really gone at last?

My heart! I shall not reach the window. Needs
Must I have sinned much, so to suffer.

[*She lifts the small lamp which is suspended before the Virgin's image in the window, and places it by the purple pane.* There!

[*She returns to the seat in front*

Mildred and Mertoun! Mildred, with consent
Of all the world and Thorold, Mertoun's bride!
Too late! 'T is sweet to think of, sweeter still
To hope for, that this blessed end soothes up
The curse of the beginning; but I know
It comes too late: 't will sweetest be of all
To dream my soul away and die upon. [*A noise without.*
The voice! Oh why, why glided sin the snake
Into the paradise Heaven meant us both?

[*The window opens softly. A low voice sings.*

There 's a woman like a dew-drop, she 's so purer than the purest;
And her noble heart 's the noblest, yes, and her sure faith 's the surest:
And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on depth of lustre
Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than the wild-grape cluster,
Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck's rose-misted marble:

Then her voice's music . . . call it the well's bubbling, the bird's warble!

[*A figure wrapped in a mantle appears at the window.*

And this woman says, "My days were sunless and my nights were moonless,
"Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark's heart's outbreak tuneless,
"If you loved me not!" And I who—(ah, for words of flame!) adore her,
Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably before her—

[*He enters, approaches her seat, and bends over her.*

I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice takes me,
And by noontide as by midnight make her mine, as hers she makes me!

[*The* Earl *throws off his slouched hat and long cloak.*

My very heart sings, so I sing, Beloved!

Mildred. Sit, Henry—do not take my hand!

Mertoun. 'T is mine.

The meeting that appalled us both so much
Is ended.

Mildred. What begins now?

Mertoun. Happiness
Such as the world contains not.

Mildred. That is it.
Our happiness would, as you say, exceed
The whole world's best of blisses: we—do we
Deserve that? Utter to your soul, what mine
Long since, Beloved, has grown used to hear,
Like a death-knell, so much regarded once,
And so familiar now; this will not be!

Mertoun. Oh, Mildred, have I met your brother's face
Compelled myself—if not to speak untruth,
Yet to disguise, to shun, to put aside
The truth, as—what had e'er prevailed on me
Save you, to venture? Have I gained at last
Your brother, the one scarer of your dreams,
And waking thoughts' sole apprehension too?
Does a new life, like a young sunrise, break
On the strange unrest of our night, confused
With rain and stormy flaw—and will you see
No dripping blossoms, no fire-tinted drops
On each live spray, no vapour steaming up,
And no expressless glory in the East?
When I am by you, to be ever by you,
When I have won you and may worship you,
Oh, Mildred, can you say "this will not be"?

Mildred. Sin has surprised us, so will punishment.

Mertoun. No—me alone, who sinned alone!

Mildred. The night

You likened our past life to—was it storm
Throughout to you then, Henry?

Mertoun. Of your life
I spoke—what am I, what my life, to waste
A thought about when you are by me?—you
It was, I said my folly called the storm
And pulled the night upon. 'T was day with me—
Perpetual dawn with me.

Mildred. Come what, come will,
You have been happy: take my hand!

Mertoun [*after a pause*]. How good
Your brother is! I figured him a cold—
Shall I say, haughty man?

Mildred. They told me all.
I know all.

Mertoun. It will soon be over.

Mildred. Over?
Oh, what is over? what must I live through
And say, "'t is over"? Is our meeting over?
Have I received in presence of them all
The partner of my guilty love—with brow
Trying to seem a maiden's brow—with lips
Which make believe that when they strive to form
Replies to you and tremble as they strive,
It is the nearest ever they approached
A stranger's . . . Henry, yours that stranger's . . . lip—

With cheek that looks a virgin's, and that is . . .
Ah God, some prodigy of thine will stop
This planned piece of deliberate wickedness
In its birth even! some fierce leprous spot
Will mar the brow's dissimulating! I
Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by heart,
But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful story,
The love, the shame, and the despair—with them
Round me aghast as round some cursed fount
That should spirt water, and spouts blood. I 'll not
. . . Henry, you do not wish that I should draw
This vengeance down? I 'll not affect a grace
That 's gone from me—gone once, and gone for ever!

Mertoun. Mildred, my honour is your own. I 'll share
Disgrace I cannot suffer by myself.
A word informs your brother I retract
This morning's offer; time will yet bring forth
Some better way of saving both of us.

Mildred. I 'll meet their faces, Henry!

Mertoun. When? to-morrow!
Get done with it!

Mildred. Oh, Henry, not to-morrow!
Next day! I never shall prepare my words
And looks and gestures sooner.—How you must
Despise me!

Mertoun. Mildred, break it if you choose,
A heart the love of you uplifted—still
Uplifts, thro' this protracted agony,
To heaven! but Mildred, answer me,—first pace
The chamber with me—once again—now, say
Calmly the part, the . . . what it is of me
You see contempt (for you did say contempt)
—Contempt for you in! I would pluck it off
And cast it from me!—but no—no, you 'll not
Repeat that?—will you, Mildred, repeat that?

Mildred. Dear Henry!

Mertoun. I was scarce a boy—e'en now
What am I more? And you were infantine
When first I met you; why, your hair fell loose
On either side! My fool's-cheek reddens now
Only in the recalling how it burned
That morn to see the shape of many a dream
—You know we boys are prodigal of charms
To her we dream of—I had heard of one,
Had dreamed of her, and I was close to her,
Might speak to her, might live and die her own,
Who knew? I spoke. Oh, Mildred, feel you not
That now, while I remember every glance
Of yours, each word of yours, with power to test
And weigh them in the diamond scales of pride,
Resolved the treasure of a first and last

Heart's love shall have been bartered at its worth,
—That now I think upon your purity
And utter ignorance of guilt—your own
Or other's guilt—the girlish undisguised
Delight at a strange novel prize—(I talk
A silly language, but interpret, you!)
If I, with fancy at its full, and reason
Scarce in its germ, enjoined you secrecy,
If you had pity on my passion, pity
On my protested sickness of the soul
To sit beside you, hear you breathe, and watch
Your eyelids and the eyes beneath—if you
Accorded gifts and knew not they were gifts—
If I grew mad at last with enterprise
And must behold my beauty in her bower
Or perish—(I was ignorant of even
My own desires—what then were you?) if sorrow—
Sin—if the end came—must I now renounce
My reason, blind myself to light, say truth
Is false and lie to God and my own soul?
Contempt were all of this!

Mildred. Do you believe . . .
Or, Henry, I 'll not wrong you—you believe
That I was ignorant. I scarce grieve o'er
The past. We 'll love on; you will love me still.

Mertoun. Oh, to love less what one has injured! Dove,

Whose pinion I have rashly hurt, my breast—
Shall my heart's warmth not nurse thee into strength?
Flower I have crushed, shall I not care for thee?
Bloom o'er my crest, my fight-mark and device!
Mildred, I love you and you love me.

Mildred. Go!

Be that your last word. I shall sleep to-night.

Mertoun. This is not our last meeting?

Mildred. One night more.

Mertoun. And then—think, then!

Mildred. Then, no sweet courtship-days,
No dawning consciousness of love for us,
No strange and palpitating births of sense
From words and looks, no innocent fears and hopes,
Reserves and confidences: morning 's over!

Mertoun. How else should love's perfected noontide follow?
All the dawn promised shall the day perform.

Mildred. So may it be! but——
You are cautious, Love?
Are sure that unobserved you scaled the walls?

Mertoun. Oh, trust me! Then our final meeting 's fixed
To-morrow night?

Mildred. Farewell! Stay, Henry . . . wherefore?
His foot is on the yew-tree bough; the turf

Receives him: now the moonlight as he runs
Embraces him—but he must go —is gone.
Ah, once again he turns—thanks, thanks, my Love!
He 's gone. Oh, I 'll believe him every word!
I was so young, I loved him so, I had
No mother, God forgot me, and I fell.
There may be pardon yet: all 's doubt beyond.
Surely the bitterness of death is past.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The Library.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM, *hastily.*

Tresham. This way! In, Gerard, quick!
[*As* GERARD *enters*, TRESHAM *secures the door.*
Now speak! or, wait—
I 'll bid you speak directly. [*Seats himself.*
Now repeat
Firmly and circumstantially the tale
You just now told me; it eludes me; either
I did not listen, or the half is gone
Away from me. How long have you lived here?
Here in my house, your father kept our woods
Before you?

Gerard. —As his father did, my lord.
I have been eating, sixty years almost,
Your bread.

Tresham. Yes, yes. You ever were of all

The servants in my father's house, I know,
The trusted one. You 'll speak the truth.
Gerard. I 'll speak
God's truth. Night after night . . .
Tresham. Since when?
Gerard. At least
A month—each midnight has some man access
To Lady Mildred's chamber.
Tresham. Tush, "access"—
No wide words like "access" to me!
Gerard. He runs
Along the woodside, crosses to the South,
Takes the left tree that ends the avenue . . .
Tresham. The last great yew-tree?
Gerard. You might stand upon
The main boughs like a platform. Then he . . .
Tresham. Quick!
Gerard. Climbs up, and, where they lessen at the top,
—I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,
I think—for this I do not vouch—a line
That reaches to the lady's casement—
Tresham. —Which
He enters not! Gerard, some wretched fool
Dares pry into my sister's privacy!
When such are young, it seems a precious thing
To have approached,—to merely have approached,

Got sight of, the abode of her they set
Their frantic thoughts upon. He does not enter?
Gerard?

Gerard. There is a lamp that 's full i' the midst,
Under a red square in the painted glass
Of Lady Mildred's . . .

Tresham. Leave that name out! Well?
That lamp?

Gerard. —Is moved at midnight higher up
To one pane—a small dark-blue pane; he waits
For that among the boughs: at sight of that,
I see him, plain as I see you, my lord,
Open the lady's casement, enter there . . .

Tresham. —And stay?

Gerard. An hour, two hours.

Tresham. And this you saw
Once?—twice?—quick!

Gerard. Twenty times.

Tresham. And what brings you
Under the yew-trees?

Gerard. The first night I left
My range so far, to track the stranger stag
That broke the pale, I saw the man.

Tresham. Yet sent
No cross-bow shaft through the marauder?

Gerard. But

He came, my lord, the first time he was seen,
In a great moonlight, light as any day,
From Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresham [*after a pause*]. You have no cause
—Who could have cause to do my sister wrong?

Gerard. Oh, my lord, only once—let me this once
Speak what is on my mind! Since first I noted
All this, I 've groaned as if a fiery net
Plucked me this way and that—fire if I turned
To her, fire if I turned to you, and fire
If down I flung myself and strove to die.
The lady could not have been seven years old
When I was trusted to conduct her safe
Through the deer-herd to stroke the snow-white fawn
I brought to eat bread from her tiny hand
Within a month. She ever had a smile
To greet me with—she . . . if it could undo
What 's done, to lop each limb from off this trunk . . .
All that is foolish talk, not fit for you—
I mean, I could not speak and bring her hurt
For Heaven's compelling. But when I was fixed
To hold my peace, each morsel of your food
Eaten beneath your roof, my birth-place too,
Choked me. I wish I had grown mad in doubts
What it behoved me do. This morn it seemed
Either I must confess to you, or die:

Now it is done, I seem the vilest worm
That crawls, to have betrayed my lady.

Tresham. No—
No, Gerard!

Gerard. Let me go!

Tresham. A man, you say:
What man? Young? Not a vulgar hind? What dress?

Gerard. A slouched hat and a large dark foreign cloak
Wraps his whole form; even his face is hid;
But I should judge him young: no hind, be sure!

Tresham. Why?

Gerard. He is ever armed: his sword projects
Beneath the cloak.

Tresham. Gerard,—I will not say
No word, no breath of this!

Gerard. Thanks, thanks, my lord! [*Goes.*

Tresham [*paces the room. After a pause*].
Oh, thought 's absurd!—as with some monstrous fact
Which, when ill thoughts beset us, seems to give
Merciful God that made the sun and stars,
The waters and the green delights of earth,
The lie! I apprehend the monstrous fact—
Yet know the maker of all worlds is good,
And yield my reason up, inadequate

To reconcile what yet I do behold—
Blasting my sense! There 's cheerful day outside:
This is my library, and this the chair
My father used to sit in carelessly
After his soldier-fashion, while I stood
Between his knees to question him: and here
Gerard our grey retainer,—as he says,
Fed with our food, from sire to son, an age,—
Has told a story—I am to believe!
That Mildred . . . oh, no, no! both tales are true,
Her pure cheek's story and the forester's!
Would she, or could she, err—much less, confound
All guilts of treachery, of craft, of . . . Heaven
Keep me within its hand!—I will sit here
Until thought settle and I see my course.
Avert, oh God, only this woe from me!

[*As he sinks his head between his arms on the table,* GUENDOLEN'S *voice is heard at the door.*

Lord Tresham! [*She knocks.*] Is Lord Tresham there?

[TRESHAM, *hastily turning, pulls down the first book above him and opens it.*

Tresham. Come in! [*She enters.*

Ha, Guendolen!—good morning.

Guendolen. Nothing more?

Tresham. What should I say more?

Guendolen. Pleasant question! more?

This more. Did I besiege poor Mildred's brain
Last night till close on morning with "the Earl,"
"The Earl"—whose worth did I asseverate
Till I am very fain to hope that . . . Thorold,
What is all this? You are not well!

Tresham. Who, I?
You laugh at me.

Guendolen. Has what I 'm fain to hope,
Arrived then? Does that huge tome show some blot
In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer back
Than Arthur's time?

Tresham. When left you Mildred's chamber?

Guendolen. Oh, late enough, I told you! The main thing
To ask is, how I left her chamber,—sure,
Content yourself, she 'll grant this paragon
Of Earls no such ungracious . . .

Tresham. Send her here!

Guendolen. Thorold?

Tresham. I mean—acquaint her, Guendolen,
—But mildly!

Guendolen. Mildly?

Tresham. Ah, you guessed aright!
I am not well: there is no hiding it.
But tell her I would see her at her leisure—
That is, at once! here in the library!

The passage in that old Italian book
We hunted for so long is found, say, found—
And if I let it slip again . . . you see,
That she must come—and instantly!
Guendolen. I 'll die
Piecemeal, record that, if there have not gloomed
Some blot i' the 'scutcheon!
Tresham. Go! or, Guendolen,
Be you at call,—with Austin, if you choose,—
In the adjoining gallery! There, go! [GUENDOLEN *goes.*
Another lesson to me! You might bid
A child disguise his heart's sore, and conduct
Some sly investigation point by point
With a smooth brow, as well as bid me catch
The inquisitorial cleverness some praise.
If you had told me yesterday, "There 's one
"You needs must circumvent and practise with,
"Entrap by policies, if you would worm
"The truth out: and that one is—Mildred!" There,
There—reasoning is thrown away on it!
Prove she 's unchaste . . . why, you may after prove
That she 's a poisoner, traitress, what you will!
Where I can comprehend nought, nought 's to say.
Or do, or think. Force on me but the first
Abomination,—then outpour all plagues,
And I shall ne'er make count of them.

Enter MILDRED.

Mildred. . . . What book
Is it I wanted, Thorold? Guendolen
Thought you were pale; you are not pale. That book?
That 's Latin surely.

Tresham. Mildred, here 's a line,
(Don't lean on me: I 'll English it for you)
"Love conquers all things." What love conquers them?
What love should you esteem—best love?

Mildred. . . . True love.

Tresham. I mean, and should have said, whose love is best
Of all that love or that profess to love?

Mildred. The list 's so long: there 's father's, mother's, husband's . . .

Tresham. Mildred, I do believe a brother's love
For a sole sister must exceed them all.
For see now, only see! there 's no alloy
Of earth that creeps into the perfect'st gold
Of other loves—no gratitude to claim;
You never gave her life, not even aught
That keeps life—never tended her, instructed,
Enriched her—so, your love can claim no right
O'er her save pure love's claim: that 's what I call

Freedom from earthliness. You 'll never hope
To be such friends, for instance, she and you,
As when you hunted cowslips in the woods
Or played together in the meadow hay.
Oh yes—with age, respect comes, and your worth
Is felt, there 's growing sympathy of tastes,
There 's ripened friendship, there 's confirmed esteem:
—Much head these make against the new-comer!
The startling apparition, the strange youth—
Whom one half-hour's conversing with, or, say,
Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all change
This Ovid ever sang about) your soul
. . . Her soul, that is,—the sister's soul! With her
'T was winter yesterday; now, all is warmth,
The green leaf's springing and the turtle's voice,
"Arise and come away!" Come whither?—far
Enough from the esteem, respect, and all
The brother's somewhat insignificant
Array of rights! All which he knows before,
Has calculated on so long ago!
I think such love, (apart from yours and mine,)
Contented with its little term of life,
Intending to retire betimes, aware
How soon the background must be place for it,
—I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds
All the world's love in its unworldliness.

Mildred. What is this for?

Tresham. This, Mildred, is it for!
Or, no, I cannot go to it so soon!
That 's one of many points my haste left out—
Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-slight film
Between the being tied to you by birth,
And you, until those slender threads compose
A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes
And fears and fancies, all her life, from yours:
So close you live and yet so far apart!
And must I rend this web, tear up, break down
The sweet and palpitating mystery
That makes her sacred? You—for you I mean,
Shall I speak, shall I not speak?

Mildred. Speak!

Tresham. I will.
Is there a story men could—any man
Could tell of you, you would conceal from me?
I 'll never think there 's falsehood on that lip.
Say "There is no such story men could tell,"
And I 'll believe you, though I disbelieve
The world—the world of better men than I,
And women such as I suppose you. Speak!
[*After a pause.*] Not speak? Explain then! Clear it
up then! Move
Some of the miserable weight away

That presses lower than the grave! Not speak?
Some of the dead weight, Mildred! Ah, if I
Could bring myself to plainly make their charge
Against you! Must I, Mildred? Silent still?
[*After a pause.*] Is there a gallant that has night by night
Admittance to your chamber?
[*After a pause.*] Then, his name!
Till now, I only had a thought for you:
But now,—his name!

Mildred. Thorold, do you devise
Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit
There be! 'T is nought to say that I 'll endure
And bless you,—that my spirit yearns to purge
Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire:
But do not plunge me into other guilt!
Oh, guilt enough! I cannot tell his name.

Tresham. Then judge yourself! How should I act?
Pronounce!

Mildred. Oh, Thorold, you must never tempt me thus!
To die here in this chamber by that sword
Would seem like punishment: so should I glide,
Like an arch-cheat, into extremest bliss!
'T were easily arranged for me: but you—
What would become of you?

Tresham. And what will now
Become of me? I 'll hide your shame and mine

From every eye; the dead must heave their hearts
Under the marble of our chapel-floor;
They cannot rise and blast you. You may wed
Your paramour above our mother's tomb;
Our mother cannot move from 'neath your foot.
We too will somehow wear this one day out:
But with to-morrow hastens here—the Earl!
The youth without suspicion face can come
From Heaven, and heart from . . . whence proceed such hearts?
I have despatched last night at your command
A missive bidding him present himself
To-morrow—here—thus much is said; the rest
Is understood as if 't were written down—
"His suit finds favour in your eyes." Now dictate
This morning's letter that shall countermand
Last night's—do dictate that!

Mildred. But, Thorold—if
I will receive him as I said?

Tresham. The Earl?

Mildred. I will receive him.

Tresham [*starting up*]. Ho there! Guendolen!

GUENDOLEN *and* AUSTIN *enter.*

And, Austin, you are welcome, too! Look there!
The woman there!

Austin and Guendolen. How? Mildred?
Tresham. Mildred once!
Now the receiver night by night, when sleep
Blesses the inmates of her father's house,
—I say, the soft sly wanton that receives
Her guilt's accomplice 'neath this roof which holds
You, Guendolen, you, Austin, and has held
A thousand Treshams—never one like her!
No lighter of the signal-lamp her quick
Foul breath near quenches in hot eagerness
To mix with breath as foul! no loosener
O' the lattice, practised in the stealthy tread,
The low voice and the noiseless come-and-go!
Not one composer of the bacchant's mien
Into—what you thought Mildred's, in a word!
Know her!
Guendolen. Oh, Mildred, look to me, at least!
Thorold—she 's dead, I 'd say, but that she stands
Rigid as stone and whiter!
Tresham. You have heard . . .
Guendolen. Too much! You must proceed no further.
Mildred. Yes—
Proceed! All 's truth. Go from me!
Tresham. All is truth,
She tells you! Well, you know, or ought to know,
All this I would forgive in her. I 'd con

Each precept the harsh world enjoins, I 'd take
Our ancestors' stern verdicts one by one,
I 'd bind myself before them to exact
The prescribed vengeance—and one word of hers,
The sight of her, the bare least memory
Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's pride
Above all prides, my all in all so long,
Would scatter every trace of my resolve.
What were it silently to waste away
And see her waste away from this day forth,
Two scathed things with leisure to repent,
And grow acquainted with the grave, and die
Tired out if not at peace, and be forgotten?
It were not so impossible to bear.
But this—that, fresh from last night's pledge renewed
Of love with the successful gallant there,
She calmly bids me help her to entice,
Inveigle an unconscious trusting youth
Who thinks her all that 's chaste and good and pure,
—Invites me to betray him . . . who so fit
As honour's self to cover shame's arch-deed?
—That she 'll receive Lord Mertoun (her own phrase)—
This, who could bear? Why, you have heard of thieves,
Stabbers, the earth's disgrace, who yet have laughed,
"Talk not to me of torture – I 'll betray
"No comrade I 've pledged faith to!"—you have heard

Of wretched women—all but Mildreds—tied
By wild illicit ties to losels vile
You 'd tempt them to forsake; and they 'll reply
"Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I find
"In him, why should I leave him then for gold,
"Repute or friends?"—and you have felt your heart
Respond to such poor outcasts of the world
As to so many friends; bad as you please,
You 've felt they were God's men and women still,
So, not to be disowned by you. But she
That stands there, calmly gives her lover up
As means to wed the Earl that she may hide
Their intercourse the surelier: and, for this,
I curse her to her face before you all.
Shame hunt her from the earth! Then Heaven do right
To both! It hears me now—shall judge her then!

[*As* MILDRED *faints and falls,* TRESHAM *rushes out.*

Austin. Stay, Tresham, we 'll accompany you!

Guendolen. We?
What, and leave Mildred? We? Why, where 's my place
But by her side, and where yours but by mine?
Mildred—one word! Only look at me, then!

Austin. No, Guendolen! I echo Thorold's voice.
She is unworthy to behold . . .

Guendolen. Us two?
If you spoke on reflection, and if I

Approved your speech—if you (to put the thing
At lowest) you the soldier, bound to make
The king's cause yours and fight for it, and throw
Regard to others of its right or wrong,
—If with a death-white woman you can help,
Let alone sister, let alone a Mildred,
You left her—or if I, her cousin, friend
This morning, playfellow but yesterday,
Who said, or thought at least a thousand times,
"I 'd serve you if I could," should now face round
And say, "Ah, that 's to only signify
"I 'd serve you while you 're fit to serve yourself:
"So long as fifty eyes await the turn
"Of yours to forestall its yet half-formed wish,
"I 'll proffer my assistance you 'll not need—
"When every tongue is praising you, I 'll join
"The praisers' chorus—when you 're hemmed about
"With lives between you and detraction—lives
"To be laid down if a rude voice, rash eye,
"Rough hand should violate the sacred ring
"Their worship throws about you,—then indeed,
"Who 'll stand up for you stout as I?" If so
We said, and so we did,—not Mildred there
Would be unworthy to behold us both,
But we should be unworthy, both of us,
To be beheld by—by—your meanest dog,

Which, if that sword were broken in your face
Before a crowd, that badge torn off your breast,
And you cast out with hooting and contempt,
—Would push his way thro' all the hooters, gain
Your side, go off with you and all your shame
To the next ditch you choose to die in! Austin,
Do you love me? Here 's Austin, Mildred,—here 's
Your brother says he does not believe half—
No, nor half that—of all he heard! He says,
Look up and take his hand!

Austin. Look up and take
My hand, dear Mildred!

Mildred. I—I was so young!
Beside, I loved him, Thorold—and I had
No mother; God forgot me: so, I fell.

Guendolen. Mildred!

Mildred. Require no further! Did I dream
That I could palliate what is done? All 's true.
Now, punish me! A woman takes my hand?
Let go my hand! You do not know, I see.
I thought that Thorold told you.

Guendolen. What is this?
Where start you to?

Mildred. Oh, Austin, loosen me!
You heard the whole of it—your eyes were worse,

In their surprise, than Thorold's! Oh, unless
You stay to execute his sentence, loose
My hand! Has Thorold gone, and are you here?

Guendolen. Here, Mildred, we two friends of yours will wait
Your bidding; be you silent, sleep or muse!
Only, when you shall want your bidding done,
How can we do it if we are not by?
Here 's Austin waiting patiently your will!
One spirit to command, and one to love
And to believe in it and do its best,
Poor as that is, to help it—why, the world
Has been won many a time, its length and breadth,
By just such a beginning!

Mildred. I believe
If once I threw my arms about your neck
And sunk my head upon your breast, that I
Should weep again.

Guendolen. Let go her hand now, Austin!
Wait for me. Pace the gallery and think
On the world's seemings and realities,
Until I call you. [AUSTIN *goes.*

Mildred. No—I cannot weep.
No more tears from this brain — no sleep — no tears!
O Guendolen, I love you!

Guendolen. Yes: and "love"
Is a short word that says so very much!
It says that you confide in me.
Mildred. Confide!
Guendolen. Your lover's name, then! I've so much to learn,
Ere I can work in your behalf!
Mildred. My friend,
You know I cannot tell his name.
Guendolen. At least
He is your lover? and you love him too?
Mildred. Ah, do you ask me that?—but I am fallen
So low!
Guendolen. You love him still, then?
Mildred. My sole prop
Against the guilt that crushes me! I say,
Each night ere I lie down, "I was so young—
"I had no mother, and I loved him so!"
And then God seems indulgent, and I dare
Trust him my soul in sleep.
Guendolen. How could you let us
E'en talk to you about Lord Mertoun then?
Mildred. There is a cloud around me.
Guendolen. But you said
You would receive his suit in spite of this?
Mildred. I say there is a cloud . . .

Guendolen. No cloud to me!
Lord Mertoun and your lover are the same!

Mildred. What maddest fancy . . .

Guendolen [*calling aloud*]. Austin! (spare your pains—
When I have got a truth, that truth I keep)—

Mildred. By all you love, sweet Guendolen, forbear!
Have I confided in you . . .

Guendolen. Just for this!
Austin!—Oh, not to guess it at the first!
But I did guess it—that is, I divined,
Felt by an instinct how it was: why else
Should I pronounce you free from all that heap
Of sins which had been irredeemable?
I felt they were not yours—what other way
Than this, not yours? The secret 's wholly mine!

Mildred. If you would see me die before his face . . .

Guendolen. I 'd hold my peace! And if the Earl returns
To-night?

Mildred. Ah Heaven, he 's lost!

Guendolen. I thought so. Austin!

Enter AUSTIN.

Oh, where have you been hiding?

Austin. Thorold 's gone,
I know not how, across the meadow-land.

I watched him till I lost him in the skirts
O' the beech-wood.

Guendolen. Gone? All thwarts us.

Mildred. Thorold too?

Guendolen. I have thought. First lead this Mildred to her room.

Go on the other side; and then we 'll seek
Your brother: and I 'll tell you, by the way,
The greatest comfort in the world. You said
There was a clue to all. Remember, Sweet,
He said there was a clue! I hold it. Come!

ACT III.

SCENE I. — *The end of the Yew-tree Avenue under* MILDRED'S *window. A light seen through a central red pane.*

Enter TRESHAM *through the trees.*

Again here! But I cannot lose myself.
The heath—the orchard—I have traversed glades
And dells and bosky paths which used to lead
Into green wild-wood depths, bewildering
My boy's adventurous step. And now they tend
Hither or soon or late; the blackest shade
Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the trees ope wide,
And the dim turret I have fled from, fronts
Again my step; the very river put
Its arm about me and conducted me
To this detested spot. Why then, I 'll shun
Their will no longer: do your will with me!
Oh, bitter! To have reared a towering scheme
Of happiness, and to behold it razed,
Were nothing: all men hope, and see their hopes
Frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope anew.

But I . . . to hope that from a line like ours
No horrid prodigy like this would spring,
Were just as though I hoped that from these old
Confederates against the sovereign day,
Children of older and yet older sires,
Whose living coral berries dropped, as now
On me, on many a baron's surcoat once,
On many a beauty's whimple—would proceed
No poison-tree, to thrust. from hell its root,
Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.
Why came I here? What must I do? [*A bell strikes.*]
A bell?
Midnight! and 't is at midnight . . . Ah, I catch
—Woods, river, plains, I catch your meaning now,
And I obey you! Hist! This tree will serve.

[*He retires behind one of the trees. After a pause, enter* MERTOUN *cloaked as before.*

Mertoun. Not time! Beat out thy last voluptuous beat
Of hope and fear, my heart! I thought the clock
I' the chapel struck as I was pushing through
The ferns. And so I shall no more see rise
My love-star! Oh, no matter for the past!
So much the more delicious task to watch
Mildred revive: to pluck out, thorn by thorn,
All traces of the rough forbidden path

My rash love lured her to! Each day must see
Some fear of hers effaced, some hope renewed:
Then there will be surprises, unforeseen
Delights in store. I 'll not regret the past.
[*The light is placed above in the purple pane.*
And see, my signal rises, Mildred's star!
I never saw it lovelier than now
It rises for the last time. If it sets,
'T is that the re-assuring sun may dawn.
[*As he prepares to ascend the last tree of the avenue.*
TRESHAM *arrests his arm.*
Unhand me—peasant, by your grasp! Here 's gold.
'T was a mad freak of mine. I said I 'd pluck
A branch from the white-blossomed shrub beneath
The casement there. Take this, and hold your peace.
Tresham. Into the moonlight yonder, come with me!
Out of the shadow!
Mertoun. I am armed, fool!
Tresham. Yes,
Or no? You 'll come into the light, or no?
My hand is on your throat—refuse!—
Mertoun. That voice!
Where have I heard . . . no—that was mild and slow.
I 'll come with you. [*They advance.*
Tresham. You 're armed: that 's well. Declare
Your name: who are you?

Mertoun. (Tresham!—she is lost!)

Tresham. Oh, silent? Do you know, you bear yourself
Exactly as, in curious dreams I 've had
How felons, this wild earth is full of, look
When they 're detected, still your kind has looked!
The bravo holds an assured countenance,
The thief is voluble and plausible,
But silently the slave of lust has crouched
When I have fancied it before a man.
Your name!

Mertoun. I do conjure Lord Tresham—ay,
Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail—
That he for his own sake forbear to ask
My name! As heaven 's above, his future weal
Or woe depends upon my silence! Vain!
I read your white inexorable face.
Know me, Lord Tresham! [*He throws off his disguises.*

Tresham. Mertoun!
[*After a pause.*] Draw now!

Mertoun. Hear me
But speak first!

Tresham. Not one least word on your life!
Be sure that I will strangle in your throat
The least word that informs me how you live
And yet seem what you seem! No doubt 't was you
Taught Mildred still to keep that face and sin.

We should join hands in frantic sympathy
If you once taught me the unteachable,
Explained how you can live so, and so lie.
With God's help I retain, despite my sense,
The old belief—a life like yours is still
Impossible. Now draw!

Mertoun. Not for my sake,
Do I entreat a hearing—for your sake,
And most, for her sake!

Tresham. Ha ha, what should I
Know of your ways? A miscreant like yourself,
How must one rouse his ire? A blow?—that 's pride
No doubt, to him! One spurns him, does one not?
Or sets the foot upon his mouth, or spits
Into his face! Come! Which, or all of these?

Mertoun. 'Twixt him and me and Mildred, Heaven be judge!
Can I avoid this? Have your will, my lord!

[*He draws and, after a few passes, falls.*

Tresham. You are not hurt?

Mertoun. You 'll hear me now!

Tresham. But rise!

Mertoun. Ah, Tresham, say I not "you 'll hear me now!"
And what procures a man the right to speak
In his defence before his fellow man,

But—I suppose—the thought that presently
He may have leave to speak before his God
His whole defence?

Tresham. Not hurt? It cannot be!
You made no effort to resist me. Where
Did my sword reach you? Why not have returned
My thrusts? Hurt where?

Mertoun. My lord—

Tresham. How young he is!

Mertoun. Lord Tresham, I am very young, and yet
I have entangled other lives with mine.
Do let me speak, and do believe my speech!
That when I die before you presently,—

Tresham. Can you stay here till I return with help?

Mertoun. Oh, stay by me! When I was less than boy
I did you grievous wrong and knew it not—
Upon my honour, knew it not! Once known,
I could not find what seemed a better way
To right you than I took: my life—you feel
How less than nothing were the giving you
The life you 've taken! But I thought my way
The better only for your sake and hers:
And as you have decided otherwise,
Would I had an infinity of lives
To offer you! Now say—instruct me—think!

Can you, from the brief minutes I have left,
Eke out my reparation? Oh think—think!
For I must wring a partial—dare I say,
Forgiveness from you, ere I die?

Tresham. I do
Forgive you.

Mertoun. Wait and ponder that great word!
Because, if you forgive me, I shall hope
To speak to you of—Mildred!

Tresham. Mertoun, haste
And anger have undone us. 'T is not you
Should tell me for a novelty you 're young,
Thoughtless, unable to recall the past.
Be but your pardon ample as my own!

Mertoun. Ah, Tresham, that a sword-stroke and a drop
Of blood or two, should bring all this about!
Why, 't was my very fear of you, my love
Of you—(what passion like a boy's for one
Like you?)—that ruined me! I dreamed of you –
You, all accomplished, courted everywhere,
The scholar and the gentleman. I burned
To knit myself to you: but I was young,
And your surpassing reputation kept me
So far aloof! Oh, wherefore all that love?
With less of love, my glorious yesterday

Of praise and gentlest words and kindest looks,
Had taken place perchance six months ago.
Even now, how happy we had been! And yet
I know the thought of this escaped you, Tresham!
Let me look up into your face; I feel
'T is changed above me: yet my eyes are glazed.
Where? where?

[*As he endeavours to raise himself, his eye catches the lamp.*

Ah, Mildred! What will Mildred do?
Tresham, her life is bound up in the life
That 's bleeding fast away! I 'll live—must live,
There, if you 'll only turn me I shall live
And save her! Tresham—oh, had you but heard!
Had you but heard! What right was yours to set
The thoughtless foot upon her life and mine,
And then say, as we perish, "Had I thought,
"All had gone otherwise"? We 've sinned and die:
Never you sin, Lord Tresham! for you 'll die,
And God will judge you.

Tresham. Yes, be satisfied!
That process is begun.

Mertoun. And she sits there
Waiting for me! Now, say you this to her—
You, not another—say, I saw him die
As he breathed this, "I love her"—you don't know

What those three small words mean! Say, loving her
Lowers me down the bloody slope to death
With memories . . . I speak to her, not you,
Who had no pity, will have no remorse,
Perchance intend her . . . Die along with me,
Dear Mildred! 't is so easy, and you 'll 'scape
So much unkindness! Can I lie at rest,
With rude speech spoken to you, ruder deeds
Done to you?—heartless men shall have my heart,
And I tied down with grave-clothes and the worm,
Aware, perhaps, of every blow—oh God!—
Upon those lips—yet of no power to tear
The felon stripe by stripe! Die, Mildred! Leave
Their honourable world to them! For God
We 're good enough, though the world casts us out.

[*A whistle is heard.*

Tresham. Ho, Gerard!

Enter GERARD, AUSTIN *and* GUENDOLEN, *with lights.*

No one speak! You see what 's done.
I cannot bear another voice.

Mertoun. There 's light—
Light all about me, and I move to it.
Tresham, did I not tell you—did you not
Just promise to deliver words of mine
To Mildred?

Tresham. I will bear those words to her.

Mertoun. Now?

Tresham. Now. Lift you the body, and leave me
The head.

[*As they have half raised* MERTOUN, *he turns suddenly.*

Mertoun. I knew they turned me: turn me not from
her!
There! stay you! there! [*Dies.*

Guendolen [*after a pause*]. Austin, remain you here
With Thorold until Gerard comes with help:
Then lead him to his chamber. I must go
To Mildred.

Tresham. Guendolen, I hear each word
You utter. Did you hear him bid me give
His message? Did you hear my promise? I,
And only I, see Mildred.

Guendolen. She will die.

Tresham. Oh no, she will not die! I dare not hope
She 'll die. What ground have you to think she 'll die?
Why, Austin 's with you!

Austin. Had we but arrived
Before you fought!

Tresham. There was no fight at all.
He let me slaughter him—the boy! I 'll trust
The body there to you and Gerard—thus!
Now bear him on before me.

Austin. Whither bear him?

Tresham. Oh, to my chamber! When we meet there next,
We shall be friends. [*They bear out the body of* MERTOUN.
Will she die, Guendolen?

Guendolen. Where are you taking me?

Tresham. He fell just here.
Now answer me. Shall you in your whole life
—You who have nought to do with Mertoun's fate,
Now you have seen his breast upon the turf,
Shall you e'er walk this way if you can help?
When you and Austin wander arm-in-arm
Through our ancestral grounds, will not a shade
Be ever on the meadow and the waste—
Another kind of shade than when the night
Shuts the woodside with all its whispers up?
But will you ever so forget his breast
As carelessly to cross this bloody turf
Under the black yew avenue? That 's well!
You turn your head: and I then?—

Guendolen. What is done
Is done. My care is for the living. Thorold,
Bear up against this burden: more remains
To set the neck to!

Tresham. Dear and ancient trees
My fathers planted, and I loved so well!

What have I done that, like some fabled crime
Of yore, lets loose a Fury leading thus
Her miserable dance amidst you all?
Oh, never more for me shall winds intone
With all your tops a vast antiphony,
Demanding and responding in God's praise!
Hers ye are now, not mine! Farewell—farewell!

SCENE II.—MILDRED'S *chamber.* MILDRED *alone.*

He comes not! I have heard of those who seemed
Resourceless in prosperity,-- you thought
Sorrow might slay them when she listed; yet
Did they so gather up their diffused strength
At her first menace, that they bade her strike,
And stood and laughed her subtlest skill to scorn.
Oh, 't is not so with me! The first woe fell,
And the rest fall upon it, not on me:
Else should I bear that Henry comes not?—fails
Just this first night out of so many nights?
Loving is done with. Were he sitting now,
As so few hours since, on that seat, we 'd love
No more-- contrive no thousand happy ways

To hide love from the loveless, any more.
I think I might have urged some little point
In my defence, to Thorold; he was breathless
For the least hint of a defence: but no,
The first shame over, all that would might fall.
No Henry! Yet I merely sit and think
The morn's deed o'er and o'er. I must have crept
Out of myself. A Mildred that has lost
Her lover—oh, I dare not look upon
Such woe! I crouch away from it! 'T is she,
Mildred, will break her heart, not I! The world
Forsakes me: only Henry 's left me—left?
When I have lost him, for he does not come,
And I sit stupidly . . . Oh Heaven, break up
This worse than anguish, this mad apathy,
By any means or any messenger!

Tresham [*without*]. Mildred!

Mildred. Come in! Heaven hears me!
[*Enter* TRESHAM.] You? alone?
Oh, no more cursing!

Tresham. Mildred, I must sit.
There—you sit!

Mildred. Say it, Thorold—do not look
The curse! deliver all you come to say!
What must become of me? Oh, speak that thought
Which makes your brow and cheeks so pale!

Tresham. My thought?

Mildred. All of it!

Tresham. How we waded—years ago—
After those water-lilies, till the plash,
I know not how, surprised us; and you dared
Neither advance nor turn back: so, we stood
Laughing and crying until Gerard came—
Once safe upon the turf, the loudest too,
For once more reaching the relinquished prize!
How idle thoughts are, some men's, dying men's!
Mildred,—

Mildred. You call me kindlier by my name
Than even yesterday: what is in that?

Tresham. It weighs so much upon my mind that I
This morning took an office not my own!
I might . . . of course, I must be glad or grieved,
Content or not, at every little thing
That touches you. I may with a wrung heart
Even reprove you, Mildred; I did more:
Will you forgive me?

Mildred. Thorold? do you mock?
Or no . . . and yet you bid me . . . say that word!

Tresham. Forgive me, Mildred!—are you silent, Sweet?

Mildred [*starting up*]. Why does not Henry Mertoun
come to-night?
Are you, too, silent?

[*Dashing his mantle aside, and pointing to his scabbard, which is empty.*

Ah, this speaks for you!
You 've murdered Henry Mertoun! Now proceed!
What is it I must pardon? This and all?
Well, I do pardon you—I think I do.
Thorold, how very wretched you must be!

Tresham. He bade me tell you . . .

Mildred. What I do forbid
Your utterance of! So much that you may tell
And will not—how you murdered him . . . but, no!
You 'll tell me that he loved me, never more
Than bleeding out his life there: must I say
"Indeed," to that? Enough! I pardon you.

Tresham. You cannot, Mildred! for the harsh words, yes:
Of this last deed Another 's judge: whose doom
I wait in doubt, despondency and fear.

Mildred. Oh, true! There 's nought for me to pardon! True!
You loose my soul of all its cares at once.
Death makes me sure of him for ever! You
Tell me his last words? He shall tell me them,
And take my answer—not in words, but reading
Himself the heart I had to read him late,
Which death . . .

Tresham. Death? You are dying too? Well said
Of Guendolen! I dared not hope you 'd die:
But she was sure of it.

Mildred. Tell Guendolen
I loved her, and tell Austin . . .

Tresham. Him you loved:
And me?

Mildred. Ah, Thorold! Was 't not rashly done
To quench that blood, on fire with youth and hope
And love of me—whom you loved too, and yet
Suffered to sit here waiting his approach
While you were slaying him? Oh, doubtlessly
You let him speak his poor confused boy's-speech
—Do his poor utmost to disarm your wrath
And respite me!—you let him try to give
The story of our love and ignorance,
And the brief madness and the long despair—
You let him plead all this, because your code
Of honour bids you hear before you strike:
But at the end, as he looked up for life
Into your eyes—you struck him down!

Tresham. No! No!
Had I but heard him—had I let him speak
Half the truth—less—had I looked long on him
I had desisted! Why, as he lay there,
The moon on his flushed cheek, I gathered all

The story ere he told it: I saw through
The troubled surface of his crime and yours
A depth of purity immovable,
Had I but glanced, where all seemed turbidest
Had gleamed some inlet to the calm beneath;
I would not glance: my punishment 's at hand.
There, Mildred, is the truth! and you—say on—
You curse me?

Mildred. As I dare approach that Heaven
Which has not bade a living thing despair,
Which needs no code to keep its grace from stain,
But bids the vilest worm that turns on it
Desist and be forgiven,—I—forgive not,
But bless you, Thorold, from my soul of souls!

[*Falls on his neck.*

There! Do not think too much upon the past!
The cloud that 's broke was all the same a cloud
While it stood up between my friend and you;
You hurt him 'neath its shadow: but is that
So past retrieve? I have his heart, you know;
I may dispose of it: I give it you!
It loves you as mine loves! Confirm me, Henry!

[*Dies.*

Tresham. I wish thee joy, Beloved! I am glad
In thy full gladness!

Guendolen [*without*]. Mildred! Tresham!

[*Entering with* AUSTIN.] Thorold,
I could desist no longer. Ah, she swoons!
That 's well.

Tresham. Oh, better far than that!

Guendolen. She 's dead!
Let me unlock her arms!

Tresham. She threw them thus
About my neck, and blessed me, and then died:
You 'll let them stay now, Guendolen!

Austin. Leave her
And look to him! What ails you, Thorold?

Guendolen. White
As she, and whiter! Austin! quick—this side!

Austin. A froth is oozing through his clenched teeth;
Both lips, where they 're not bitten through, are black:
Speak, dearest Thorold!

Tresham. Something does weigh down
My neck beside her weight: thanks: I should fall
But for you, Austin, I believe!—there, there,
'T will pass away soon!—ah,—I had forgotten:
I am dying.

Guendolen. Thorold—Thorold—why was this?

Tresham. I said, just as I drank the poison off,
The earth would be no longer earth to me,
The life out of all life was gone from me.
There are blind ways provided, the foredone

Heart-weary player in this pageant-world
Drops out by, letting the main masque defile
By the conspicuous portal: I am through—
Just through!

Guendolen. Don't leave him, Austin! Death is close.

Tresham. Already Mildred's face is peacefuller.
I see you, Austin—feel you: here 's my hand,
Put yours in it—you, Guendolen, yours too!
You 're lord and lady now—you 're Treshams; name
And fame are yours: you hold our 'scutcheon up.
Austin, no blot on it! You see how blood
Must wash one blot away: the first blot came
And the first blood came. To the vain world's eye
All 's gules again: no care to the vain world,
From whence the red was drawn!

Austin. No blot shall come!

Tresham. I said that: yet it did come. Should it come,
Vengeance is God's, not man's. Remember me! [*Dies.*

Guendolen [*letting fall the pulseless arm*]. Ah, Thorold, we can but—remember you!

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY;

A PLAY

Ivy and violet, what do ye here
With blossom and shoot in the warm spring-weather.
Hiding the arms of Monchenci and Vere?—HANMER.

NO ONE LOVES AND HONOURS BARRY CORNWALL MORE THAN
DOES ROBERT BROWNING;
WHO, HAVING NOTHING BETTER THAN THIS PLAY TO
GIVE HIM IN PROOF OF IT,
MUST SAY SO.

LONDON: 1844.

PERSONS.

COLOMBE OF RAVESTEIN, Duchess of Juliers and Cleves.
SABYNE, ADOLF, *her attendants.*
GUIBERT, GAUCELME, MAUFROY, CLUGNET, *courtiers.*
VALENCE, *advocate of Cleves.*
PRINCE BERTHOLD, *claimant of the Duchy.*
MELCHIOR, *his confidant.*

PLACE.—*The Palace at Juliers.*
TIME, 16—.

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY.

1844.

ACT I.

MORNING.

SCENE.—*A corridor leading to the Audience-chamber.*

GAUCELME, CLUGNET, MAUFROY *and other* Courtiers, *round* GUIBERT, *who is silently reading a paper: as he drops it at the end—*

Guibert. That this should be her birthday; and the day
We all invested her, twelve months ago,
As the late Duke's true heiress and our liege;
And that this also must become the day . . .
Oh, miserable lady!

1st Courtier. Ay, indeed?

2nd Courtier. Well, Guibert?

3rd Courtier. But your news, my friend, your news!
The sooner, friend, one learns Prince Berthold's pleasure,

The better for us all: how writes the Prince?
Give me! I 'll read it for the common good.

Guibert. In time, sir, —but till time comes, pardon me!
Our old Duke just disclosed his child's retreat,
Declared her true succession to his rule,
And died: this birthday was the day, last year,
We convoyed her from Castle Ravestein—
That sleeps out trustfully its extreme age
On the Meuse' quiet bank, where she lived queen
Over the water-buds,—to Juliers' court
With joy and bustle. Here again we stand;
Sir Gaucelme's buckle 's constant to his cap:
To-day 's much such another sunny day!

Gaucelme. Come, Guibert, this outgrows a jest, I think!
You 're hardly such a novice as to need
The lesson, you pretend.

Guibert. What lesson, sir?
That everybody, if he 'd thrive at court,
Should, first and last of all, look to himself?
Why, no: and therefore with your good example,
(—Ho, Master Adolf!)—to myself I 'll look.

Enter ADOLF.

Guibert. The Prince's letter; why, of all men else,
Comes it to me?

Adolf. By virtue of your place,
Sir Guibert! 'T was the Prince's express charge,
His envoy told us, that the missive there
Should only reach our lady by the hand
Of whosoever held your place.

Guibert. Enough! [ADOLF *retires*
Then, gentles, who 'll accept a certain poor
Indifferently honourable place,
My friends, I make no doubt, have gnashed their teeth
At leisure minutes these half-dozen years,
To find me never in the mood to quit?
Who asks may have it, with my blessing, and—
This to present our lady. Who 'll accept?
You, — you, you? There it lies, and may, for me!

Maufroy [*a youth, picking up the paper, reads aloud*].
"Prince Berthold, proved by titles following
"Undoubted Lord of Juliers, comes this day
"To claim his own, with licence from the Pope,
"The Emperor, the Kings of Spain and France" . . .

Gaucelme. Sufficient "titles following," I judge!
Don't read another! Well,—"to claim his own?"

Maufroy. "—And take possession of the Duchy held
"Since twelve months, to the true heir's prejudice,
"By" . . . Colombe, Juliers' mistress, so she thinks,
And Ravestein's mere lady, as we find.
Who wants the place and paper? Guibert 's right.

I hope to climb a little in the world,—
I 'd push my fortunes,—but, no more than he,
Could tell her on this happy day of days,
That, save the nosegay in her hand, perhaps,
There 's nothing left to call her own. Sir Clugnet,
You famish for promotion; what say you?

Clugnet [*an old man*]. To give this letter were a sort,
I take it,
Of service: services ask recompense:
What kind of corner may be Ravestein?

Guibert. The castle? Oh, you 'd share her fortunes?
Good!
Three walls stand upright, full as good as four,
With no such bad remainder of a roof.

Clugnet. Oh,—but the town?

Guibert. Five houses, fifteen huts;
A church whereto was once a spire, 't is judged;
And half a dyke, except in time of thaw.

Clugnet. Still, there 's some revenue?

Guibert. Else Heaven forfend!
You hang a beacon out, should fogs increase;
So, when the Autumn floats of pine-wood steer
Safe 'mid the white confusion, thanks to you,
Their grateful raftsman flings a guilder in;
—That 's if he mean to pass your way next time.

Clugnet. If not?

Guibert. Hang guilders, then! He blesses you.

Clugnet. What man do you suppose me? Keep your paper!

And, let me say, it shows no handsome spirit
To dally with misfortune: keep your place!

Gaucelme. Some one must tell her.

Guibert. Some one may: you may!

Gaucelme. Sir Guibert, 't is no trifle turns me sick
Of court-hypocrisy at years like mine,
But this goes near it. Where 's there news at all?
Who 'll have the face, for instance, to affirm
He never heard, e'en while we crowned the girl,
That Juliers' tenure was by Salic law;
That one, confessed her father's cousin's child,
And, she away, indisputable heir,
Against our choice protesting and the Duke's,
Claimed Juliers?—nor, as he preferred his claim,
That first this, then another potentate,
Inclined to its allowance?—I or you,
Or any one except the lady's self?
Oh, it had been the direst cruelty
To break the business to her! Things might change:
At all events, we 'd see next masque at end,
Next mummery over first: and so the edge
Was taken off sharp tidings as they came,
Till here 's the Prince upon us, and there 's she

—Wreathing her hair, a song between her lips,
With just the faintest notion possible
That some such claimant earns a livelihood
About the world, by feigning grievances—
Few pay the story of, but grudge its price,
And fewer listen to, a second time.
Your method proves a failure; now try mine!
And, since this must be carried . . .

Guibert [*snatching the paper from him*]. By your leave!

Your zeal transports you! 'T will not serve the Prince
So much as you expect, this course you 'd take.
If she leaves quietly her palace,—well;
But if she died upon its threshold,—no:
He 'd have the trouble of removing her.
Come, gentles, we 're all—what the devil knows!
You, Gaucelme, won't lose character, beside:
You broke your father's heart superiorly
To gather his succession—never blush!
You 're from my province, and, be comforted,
They tell of it with wonder to this day.
You can afford to let your talent sleep.
We 'll take the very worst supposed, as true:
There, the old Duke knew, when he hid his child
Among the river-flowers at Ravestein,
With whom the right lay! Call the Prince our Duke!

There, she 's no Duchess, she 's no anything
More than a young maid with the bluest eyes:
And now, sirs, we 'll not break this young maid's heart
Coolly as Gaucelme could and would! No haste!
His talent 's full-blown, ours but in the bud:
We 'll not advance to his perfection yet—
Will we, Sir Maufroy? See, I 've ruined Maufroy
For ever as a courtier!

Gaucelme. Here 's a coil!

And, count us, will you? Count its residue,
This boasted convoy, this day last year's crowd!
A birthday, too, a gratulation day!
I 'm dumb: bid that keep silence!

Maufroy and others. Eh, Sir Guibert?
He 's right: that does say something: that 's bare truth.
Ten—twelve, I make: a perilous dropping off!

Guibert. Pooh—is it audience hour? The vestibule
Swarms too, I wager, with the common sort
That want our privilege of entry here.

Gaucelme. Adolf! [*Re-enter* ADOLF.] Who 's outside?

Guibert. Oh, your looks suffice!
Nobody waiting?

Maufroy [*looking through the door-folds*]. Scarce our number!

Guibert. 'Sdeath!
Nothing to beg for, to complain about?

It can't be! Ill news spreads, but not so fast
As thus to frighten all the world!

Gaucelme. The world
Lives out of doors, sir—not with you and me
By presence-chamber porches, state-room stairs,
Wherever warmth 's perpetual: outside 's free
To every wind from every compass-point,
And who may get nipped needs be weather-wise.
The Prince comes and the lady's People go;
The snow-goose settles down, the swallows flee—
Why should they wait for winter-time? 'T is instinct.
Don't you feel somewhat chilly?

Guibert. That 's their craft?
And last year's crowders-round and criers-forth
That strewed the garlands, overarched the roads,
Lighted the bonfires, sang the loyal songs!
Well 't is my comfort, you could never call me
The People's Friend! The People keep their word—
I keep my place: don't doubt I 'll entertain
The People when the Prince comes, and the People
Are talked of! Then, their speeches—no one tongue
Found respite, not a pen had holiday
—For they wrote, too, as well as spoke, these knaves!
Now see: we tax and tithe them, pill and poll,
They wince and fret enough, but pay they must
—We manage that,—so, pay with a good grace

They might as well, it costs so little more.
But when we 've done with taxes, meet folk next
Outside the toll-booth and the rating-place,
In public—there they have us if they will,
We 're at their mercy after that, you see!
For one tax not ten devils could extort—
Over and above necessity, a grace;
This prompt disbosoming of love, to wit—
Their vine-leaf wrappage of our tribute penny,
And crowding attestation, all works well.
Yet this precisely do they thrust on us!
These cappings quick, these crook-and-cringings low,
Hand to the heart, and forehead to the knee,
With grin that shuts the eyes and opes the mouth –
So tender they their love; and, tender made,
Go home to curse us, the first doit we ask.
As if their souls were any longer theirs!
As if they had not given ample warrant
To who should clap a collar on their neck,
Rings in their nose, a goad to either flank,
And take them for the brute they boast themselves!
Stay—there 's a bustle at the outer door—
And somebody entreating . . . that 's my name!
Adolf,—I heard my name!

Adolf. 'T was probably
The suitor.

Guibert. Oh, there is one?

Adolf. With a suit
He 'd fain enforce in person.

Guibert. The good heart
—And the great fool! Just ope the mid-door's fold!
Is that a lappet of his cloak, I see?

Adolf. If it bear plenteous sign of travel . . . ay,
The very cloak my comrades tore!

Guibert. Why tore?

Adolf. He seeks the Duchess' presence in that trim:
Since daybreak, was he posted hereabouts
Lest he should miss the moment.

Guibert. Where 's he now?

Adolf. Gone for a minute possibly, not more:
They have ado enough to thrust him back.

Guibert. Ay—but my name, I caught?

Adolf. Oh, sir—he said
—What was it?—You had known him formerly,
And, he believed, would help him did you guess
He waited now; you promised him as much:
The old plea! 'Faith, he 's back,—renews the charge!
Speaking at the door.] So long as the man parleys, peace outside—
Nor be too ready with your halberts, there!

Gaucelme. My horse bespattered, as he blocked the path

A thin sour man, not unlike somebody.

Adolf. He holds a paper in his breast, whereon
He glances when his cheeks flush and his brow
At each repulse—

Gaucelme. I noticed he 'd a brow.

Adolf. So glancing, he grows calmer, leans awhile
Over the balustrade, adjusts his dress,
And presently turns round, quiet again,
With some new pretext for admittance.—Back!
[*To* GUIBERT.]—Sir, he has seen you! Now cross halberts! Ha—
Pascal is prostrate—there lies Fabian too!
No passage! Whither would the madman press?
Close the doors quick on me!

Guibert. Too late! He 's here.

Enter, hastily and with discomposed dress, VALENCE.

Valence. Sir Guibert, will you help me?—me, that come
Charged by your townsmen, all who starve at Cleves,
To represent their heights and depths of woe
Before our Duchess and obtain relief!
Such errands barricade such doors, it seems:
But not a common hindrance drives me back
On all the sad yet hopeful faces, lit
With hope for the first time, which sent me forth.

Cleves, speak for me! Cleves' men and women, speak!
Who followed me—your strongest—many a mile
That I might go the fresher from their ranks,
—Who sit—your weakest—by the city gates,
To take me fuller of what news I bring
As I return—for I must needs return!
—Can I? 'T were hard, no listener for their wrongs,
To turn them back upon the old despair—
Harder, Sir Guibert, than imploring thus—
So, I do—any way you please—implore!
If you . . . but how should you remember Cleves?
Yet they of Cleves remember you so well!
Ay, comment on each trait of you they keep,
Your words and deeds caught up at second hand,—
Proud, I believe, at bottom of their hearts,
O' the very levity and recklessness
Which only prove that you forget their wrongs.
Cleves, the grand town, whose men and women starve,
Is Cleves forgotten? Then, remember me!
You promised me that you would help me once,
For other purpose: will you keep your word?

Guibert. And who may you be, friend?

Valence. Valence of Cleves.

Guibert. Valence of . . . not the advocate of Cleves,
I owed my whole estate to, three years back?
Ay, well may you keep silence! Why, my lords,

You 've heard, I 'm sure, how, Pentecost three years,
I was so nearly ousted of my land
By some knave's pretext—(eh? when you refused me
Your ugly daughter, Clugnet!)—and you 've heard
How I recovered it by miracle
—(When I refused her!) Here 's the very friend,
—Valence of Cleves, all parties have to thank!
Nay, Valence, this procedure 's vile in you!
I 'm no more grateful than a courtier should,
But politic am I—I bear a brain,
Can cast about a little, might require
Your services a second time. I tried
To tempt you with advancement here to court
—"No!"—well, for curiosity at least
To view our life here—"No!"—our Duchess, then,—
A pretty woman 's worth some pains to see,
Nor is she spoiled, I take it, if a crown
Complete the forehead pale and tresses pure . . .

Valence. Our city trusted me its miseries,
And I am come.

Guibert. So much for taste! But "come,"—
So may you be, for anything I know,
To beg the Pope's cross, or Sir Clugnet's daughter,
And with an equal chance you get all three.
If it was ever worth your while to come,
Was not the proper way worth finding too?

Valence. Straight to the palace-portal, sir, I came—
Guibert. —And said?—
Valence. —That I had brought the miseries
Of a whole city to relieve.
Guibert. —Which saying
Won your admittance? You saw me, indeed,
And here, no doubt, you stand: as certainly,
My intervention, I shall not dispute,
Procures you audience; which, if I procure,—
That paper 's closely written—by Saint Paul,
Here flock the Wrongs, follow the Remedies,
Chapter and verse, One, Two, A, B and C!
Perhaps you 'd enter, make a reverence,
And launch these "miseries" from first to last?
Valence. How should they let me pause or turn aside?
Gaucelme [*to* VALENCE]. My worthy sir, one question!
You 've come straight
From Cleves, you tell us: heard you any talk
At Cleves about our lady?
Valence. Much.
Gaucelme. And what?
Valence. Her wish was to redress all wrongs she knew.
Gaucelme. That, you believed?
Valence. You see me, sir!
Gaucelme. —Nor stopped
Upon the road from Cleves to Juliers here,

For any—rumours you might find afloat?

Valence. I had my townsmen's wrongs to busy me.

Gaucelme. This is the lady's birthday, do you know?
—Her day of pleasure?

Valence. —That the great, I know,
For pleasure born, should still be on the watch
To exclude pleasure when a duty offers:
Even as, for duty born, the lowly too
May ever snatch a pleasure if in reach:
Both will have plenty of their birthright, sir!

Gaucelme [*aside to* GUIBERT]. Sir Guibert, here 's your man! No scruples now—
You 'll never find his like! Time presses hard.
I 've seen your drift and Adolf's too, this while,
But you can't keep the hour of audience back
Much longer, and at noon the Prince arrives.
[*Pointing to* VALENCE.] Entrust him with it—fool no chance away!

Guibert. Him?

Gaucelme. —With the missive! What 's the man to her?

Guibert. No bad thought! Yet, 't is yours, who ever played
The tempting serpent: else 't were no bad thought!
I should—and do—mistrust it for your sake,
Or else . . .

Enter an Official *who communicates with* ADOLF.

Adolf. The Duchess will receive the court.

Guibert. Give us a moment, Adolf! Valence, friend,
I 'll help you. We of the service, you 're to mark,
Have special entry, while the herd . . . the folk
Outside, get access through our help alone;
—Well, it is so, was so, and I suppose
So ever will be: your natural lot is, therefore,
To wait your turn and opportunity,
And probably miss both. Now, I engage
To set you, here and in a minute's space,
Before the lady, with full leave to plead
Chapter and verse, and A, and B, and C,
To heart's content.

Valence. I grieve that I must ask,—
This being, yourself admit, the custom here,—
To what the price of such a favour mounts?

Guibert. Just so! You 're not without a courtier's tact.
Little at court, as your quick instinct prompts,
Do such as we without a recompense.

Valence. Yours is?—

Guibert. A trifle: here 's a document
'T is some one's duty to present her Grace—
I say, not mine—these say, not theirs—such points
Have weight at court. Will you relieve us all

And take it? Just say, "I am bidden lay
"This paper at the Duchess' feet!"
Valence. No more?
I thank you, sir!
Adolf. Her Grace receives the court.
Guibert [*aside*]. Now, *sursum corda*, quoth the mass-priest! Do—
Whoever 's my kind saint, do let alone
These pushings to and fro, and pullings back;
Peaceably let me hang o' the devil's arm
The downward path, if you can't pluck me off
Completely! Let me live quite his, or yours!
[*The* Courtiers *begin to range themselves, and move toward the door.*
After me, Valence! So, our famous Cleves
Lacks bread? Yet don't we gallants buy their lace?
And dear enough—it beggars me, I know,
To keep my very gloves fringed properly.
This, Valence, is our Great State Hall you cross;
Yon grey urn 's veritable marcasite,
The Pope's gift: and those salvers testify
The Emperor. Presently you 'll set your foot
. . . But you don't speak, friend Valence!
Valence. I shall speak.
Gaucelme [*aside to* GUIBERT]. Guibert—it were no such ungraceful thing

If you and I, at first, seemed horror-struck
With the bad news. Look here, what you shall do.
Suppose you, first, clap hand to sword and cry
"Yield strangers our allegiance? First I 'll perish
"Beside your Grace!"—and so give me the cue
To . . .

Guibert. —Clap your hand to note-book and jot down
That to regale the Prince with? I conceive.
[*To* VALENCE.] Do, Valence, speak, or I shall half suspect
You 're plotting to supplant us, me the first,
I' the lady's favour! Is 't the grand harangue
You mean to make, that thus engrosses you?
—Which of her virtues you 'll apostrophize?
Or is 't the fashion you aspire to start,
Of that close-curled, not unbecoming hair?
Or what else ponder you?

Valence. My townsmen's wrongs.

ACT II.

NOON.

SCENE.—*The Presence-chamber.*

The DUCHESS *and* SABYNE.

The Duchess. Announce that I am ready for the court!

Sabyne. 'T is scarcely audience-hour, I think; your Grace
May best consult your own relief, no doubt,
And shun the crowd: but few can have arrived.

The Duchess Let those not yet arrived, then, keep away!
'T was me, this day last year at Ravestein,
You hurried. It has been full time, beside,
This half-hour. Do you hesitate?

Sabyne. Forgive me!

The Duchess. Stay, Sabyne; let me hasten to make sure
Of one true thanker: here with you begins
My audience, claim you first its privilege!

It is my birth's event they celebrate:
You need not wish me more such happy days,
But—ask some favour! Have you none to ask?
Has Adolf none, then? this was far from least
Of much I waited for impatiently,
Assure yourself! It seemed so natural
Your gift, beside this bunch of river-bells,
Should be the power and leave of doing good
To you, and greater pleasure to myself.
You ask my leave to-day to marry Adolf?
The rest is my concern.

Sabyne. Your Grace is ever
Our lady of dear Ravestein,—but, for Adolf . . .

The Duchess. "But"? You have not, sure, changed in your regard
And purpose towards him?

Sabyne. We change?

The Duchess. Well then? Well?

Sabyne. How could we two be happy, and, most like,
Leave Juliers, when—when . . . but 't is audience-time!

The Duchess. "When, if you left me, I were left indeed!"
Would you subjoin that?—Bid the court approach!
—Why should we play thus with each other, Sabyne?
Do I not know, if courtiers prove remiss,

If friends detain me, and get blame for it,
There is a cause? Of last year's fervid throng
Scarce one half comes now.

Sabyne [*aside*]. One half? No, alas!

The Duchess. So can the mere suspicion of a cloud
Over my fortunes, strike each loyal heart.
They 've heard of this Prince Berthold; and, forsooth,
Some foolish arrogant pretence he makes,
May grow more foolish and more arrogant,
They please to apprehend! I thank their love.
Admit them!

Sabyne [*aside*]. How much has she really learned?

The Duchess. Surely, whoever 's absent, Tristan waits?
—Or at least Romuald, whom my father raised
From nothing—come, he 's faithful to me, come!
(Sabyne, I should but be the prouder—yes,
The fitter to comport myself aright)
Not Romuald? Xavier - what said he to that?
For Xavier hates a parasite, I know! [SABYNE *goes out.*

The Duchess. Well, sunshine 's everywhere, and summer too.
Next year 't is the old place again, perhaps—
The water-breeze again, the birds again.
—It cannot be! It is too late to be!
What part had I, or choice in all of it?
Hither they brought me; I had not to think

Nor care, concern myself with doing good
Or ill, my task was just—to live, —to live,
And, answering ends there was no need explain,
To render Juliers happy—so they said.
All could not have been falsehood: some was love,
And wonder and obedience. I did all
They looked for: why then cease to do it now?
Yet this is to be calmly set aside,
And—ere next birthday's dawn, for aught I know,
Things change, a claimant may arrive, and I . . .
It cannot nor it shall not be! His right?
Well then, he has the right, and I have not,
—But who bade all of you surround my life
And close its growth up with your ducal crown
Which, plucked off rudely, leaves me perishing?
I could have been like one of you,—loved, hoped,
Feared, lived and died like one of you—but you
Would take that life away and give me this,
And I will keep this! I will face you! Come!

Enter the Courtiers *and* VALENCE.

The Courtiers. Many such happy mornings to your Grace!

The Duchess [*aside, as they pay their devoir*]. The same words, the same faces,—the same love!
I have been overfearful. These are few;

But these, at least, stand firmly: these are mine.
As many come as may; and if no more,
'T is that these few suffice—they do suffice!
What succour may not next year bring me? Plainly,
I feared too soon. [*To the* Courtiers.] I thank you, sirs:
all thanks!

Valence [*aside, as the* DUCHESS *passes from one group to another, conversing*].

'T is she—the vision this day last year brought,
When, for a golden moment at our Cleves,
She tarried in her progress hither. Cleves
Chose me to speak its welcome, and I spoke
—Not that she could have noted the recluse
—Ungainly, old before his time—who gazed.
Well, Heaven's gifts are not wasted, and that gaze
Kept, and shall keep me to the end, her own!
She was above it—but so would not sink
My gaze to earth! The People caught it, hers—
Thenceforward, mine; but thus entirely mine,
Who shall affirm, had she not raised my soul
Ere she retired and left me—them? She turns—
There 's all her wondrous face at once! The ground
Reels and . . . [*suddenly occupying himself with his paper*]
These wrongs of theirs I have to plead!

The Duchess [*to the* Courtiers]. Nay, compliment enough! and kindness' self

Should pause before it wish me more such years.
'T was fortunate that thus, ere youth escaped,
I tasted life's pure pleasure—one such, pure,
Is worth a thousand, mixed—and youth 's for pleasure:
Mine is received; let my age pay for it.

Gaucelme. So, pay, and pleasure paid for, thinks your Grace,
Should never go together?

Guibert. How, Sir Gaucelme?
Hurry one's feast down unenjoyingly
At the snatched breathing-intervals of work?
As good you saved it till the dull day's-end
When, stiff and sleepy, appetite is gone.
Eat first, then work upon the strength of food!

The Duchess. True: you enable me to risk my future,
By giving me a past beyond recall.
I lived, a girl, one happy leisure year:
Let me endeavour to be the Duchess now!
And so,—what news, Sir Guibert, spoke you of?

[*As they advance a little, and* GUIBERT *speaks—*
—That gentleman?

Valence [*aside*]. I feel her eyes on me.

Guibert [*to* VALENCE]. The Duchess, sir, inclines to hear your suit.
Advance! He is from Cleves.

Valence [*coming forward*. *Aside*]. Their wrongs—their wrongs!

The Duchess. And you, sir, are from Cleves? How fresh in mind,
The hour or two I passed at queenly Cleves!
She entertained me bravely, but the best
Of her good pageant seemed its standers-by
With insuppressive joy on every face!
What says my ancient famous happy Cleves?

Valence. Take the truth, lady—you are made for truth!
So think my friends: nor do they less deserve
The having you to take it, you shall think,
When you know all—nay, when you only know
How, on that day you recollect at Cleves,
When the poor acquiescing multitude
Who thrust themselves with all their woes apart
Into unnoticed corners, that the few,
Their means sufficed to muster trappings for,
Might fill the foreground, occupy your sight
With joyous faces fit to bear away
And boast of as a sample of all Cleves
—How, when to daylight these crept out once more,
Clutching, unconscious, each his empty rags
Whence the scant coin, which had not half bought bread,
That morn he shook forth, counted piece by piece,

And, well-advisedly, on perfumes spent them
To burn, or flowers to strew, before your path
—How, when the golden flood of music and bliss
Ebbed, as their moon retreated, and again
Left the sharp black-point rocks of misery bare
—Then I, their friend, had only to suggest
"Saw she the horror as she saw the pomp!"
And as one man they cried "He speaks the truth:
"Show her the horror! Take from our own mouths
"Our wrongs and show them, she will see them too!"
This they cried, lady! I have brought the wrongs.

The Duchess. Wrongs? Cleves has wrongs—apparent now and thus?
I thank you! In that paper? Give it me!

Valence. (There, Cleves!) In this! (What did I promise, Cleves?)
Our weavers, clothiers, spinners are reduced
Since . . . Oh, I crave your pardon! I forget
I buy the privilege of this approach,
And promptly would discharge my debt. I lay
This paper humbly at the Duchess' feet.

[*Presenting* GUIBERT'S *paper.*

Guibert. Stay! for the present . . .

The Duchess. Stay, sir? I take aught
That teaches me their wrongs with greater pride
Than this your ducal circlet. Thank you, sir!

[*The* DUCHESS *reads hastily; then, turning to the Courtiers—*

What have I done to you? Your deed or mine
Was it, this crowning me? I gave myself
No more a title to your homage, no,
Than church-flowers, born this season, wrote the words
In the saint's-book that sanctified them first.
For such a flower, you plucked me; well, you erred—
Well, 't was a weed; remove the eye-sore quick!
But should you not remember it has lain
Steeped in the candles' glory, palely shrined,
Nearer God's Mother than most earthly things?
—That if 't be faded 't is with prayer's sole breath—
That the one day it boasted was God's day?
Still, I do thank you! Had you used respect,
Here might I dwindle to my last white leaf,
Here lose life's latest freshness, which even yet
May yield some wandering insect rest and food:
So, fling me forth, and—all is best for all!
[*After a pause.*] Prince Berthold, who art Juliers' Duke it seems—
The King's choice, and the Emperor's, and the Pope's—
Be mine, too! Take this People! Tell not me
Of rescripts, precedents, authorities,
—But take them, from a heart that yearns to give!
Find out their love,—I could not; find their fear,—

I would not; find their like,—I never shall,
Among the flowers! [*Taking off her coronet.*
Colombe of Ravestein
Thanks God she is no longer Duchess here!

Valence [*advancing to* GUIBERT]. Sir Guibert, knight,
they call you—this of mine
Is the first step I ever set at court.
You dared make me your instrument, I find;
For that, so sure as you and I are men,
We reckon to the utmost presently:
But as you are a courtier and I none,
Your knowledge may instruct me. I, already,
Have too far outraged, by my ignorance
Of courtier-ways, this lady, to proceed
A second step and risk addressing her:
—I am degraded—you let me address!
Out of her presence, all is plain enough
What I shall do—but in her presence, too,
Surely there 's something proper to be done.
[*To the others.*] You, gentles, tell me if I guess aright—
May I not strike this man to earth?

The Courtiers [*as* GUIBERT *springs forward, withholding him*]. Let go!

—The clothiers' spokesman, Guibert? Grace a churl?

The Duchess [*to* VALENCE]. Oh, be acquainted with
your party, sir!

He 's of the oldest lineage Juliers boasts;
A lion crests him for a cognizance;
"Scorning to waver"—that 's his 'scutcheon's word;
His office with the new Duke—probably
The same in honour as with me; or more,
By so much as this gallant turn deserves.
He 's now, I dare say, of a thousand times
The rank and influence that remain with her
Whose part you take! So, lest for taking it
You suffer . . .

Valence. I may strike him then to earth?

Guibert [*falling on his knee*]. Great and dear lady, pardon me! Hear once!
Believe me and be merciful—be just!
I could not bring myself to give that paper
Without a keener pang than I dared meet
—And so felt Clugnet here, and Maufroy here
—No one dared meet it. Protestation 's cheap,—
But, if to die for you did any good,
[*To* GAUCELME.] Would not I die, sir? Say your worst of me!
But it does no good, that 's the mournful truth.
And since the hint of a resistance, even,
Would just precipitate, on you the first,
A speedier ruin—I shall not deny,
Saving myself indubitable pain,

I thought to give you pleasure (who might say?)
By showing that your only subject found
To carry the sad notice, was the man
Precisely ignorant of its contents;
A nameless, mere provincial advocate;
One whom 't was like you never saw before,
Never would see again. All has gone wrong;
But I meant right, God knows, and you, I trust!

The Duchess. A nameless advocate, this gentleman?
—(I pardon you, Sir Guibert!)

Guibert [*rising, to* VALENCE]. Sir, and you?

Valence. —Rejoice that you are lightened of a load.
Now, you have only me to reckon with.

The Duchess. One I have never seen, much less obliged?

Valence. Dare I speak, lady?

The Duchess. Dare you! Heard you not
I rule no longer?

Valence. Lady, if your rule
Were based alone on such a ground as these
[*Pointing to the* Courtiers.
Could furnish you,—abjure it! They have hidden
A source of true dominion from your sight.

The Duchess. You hear them—no such source is left . . .

Valence. Hear Cleves!

Whose haggard craftsmen rose to starve this day,
Starve now, and will lie down at night to starve,
Sure of a like to-morrow—but as sure
Of a most unlike morrow-after-that,
Since end things must, end howsoe'er things may.
What curbs the brute-force instinct in its hour?
What makes—instead of rising, all as one,
And teaching fingers, so expert to wield
Their tool, the broadsword's play or carbine's trick,
—What makes that there 's an easier help, they think,
For you, whose name so few of them can spell,
Whose face scarce one in every hundred saw,—
You simply have to understand their wrongs,
And wrongs will vanish—so, still trades are plied,
And swords lie rusting, and myself stand here?
There is a vision in the heart of each
Of justice, mercy, wisdom, tenderness
To wrong and pain, and knowledge of its cure:
And these embodied in a woman's form
That best transmits them, pure as first received,
From God above her, to mankind below.
Will you derive your rule from such a ground,
Or rather hold it by the suffrage, say,
Of this man—this—and this?

The Duchess [*after a pause*]. You come from Cleves:
How many are at Cleves of such a mind?

Valence [*from his paper*]. "We, all the manufacturers of Cleves—"

The Duchess. Or stay, sir—lest I seem too covetous—
Are you my subject? such as you describe,
Am I to you, though to no other man?

Valence [*from his paper*]. —"Valence, ordained your Advocate at Cleves"—

The Duchess [*replacing the coronet*]. Then I remain Cleves' Duchess! Take you note,
While Cleves but yields one subject of this stamp,
I stand her lady till she waves me off!
For her sake, all the Prince claims I withhold;
Laugh at each menace; and, his power defying,
Return his missive with its due contempt!

[*Casting it away.*

Guibert [*picking it up*].—Which to the Prince I will deliver, lady,
(Note it down, Gaucelme)—with your message too!

The Duchess. I think the office is a subject's, sir!
—Either . . . . how style you him?—my special guarder
The Marshal's—for who knows but violence
May follow the delivery?—Or, perhaps,
My Chancellor's—for law may be to urge
On its receipt!—Or, even my Chamberlain's—
For I may violate established form!

[*To* VALENCE.] Sir,—for the half-hour till this service ends,
Will you become all these to me?

Valence [*falling on his knee*] My liege!

The Duchess. Give me!

[*The* Courtiers *present their badges of office.*

[*Putting them by.*] Whatever was their virtue once,
They need new consecration. [*Raising* VALENCE.] Are you mine?
I will be Duchess yet! [*She retires.*

The Courtiers. Our Duchess yet!
A glorious lady! Worthy love and dread!
I 'll stand by her,—And I, whate'er betide!

Guibert [*to* VALENCE]. Well done, well done, sir! I care not who knows,
You have done nobly and I envy you—
Tho' I am but unfairly used, I think:
For when one gets a place like this I hold,
One gets too the remark that its mere wages,
The pay and the preferment, make our prize.
Talk about zeal and faith apart from these,
We 're laughed at—much would zeal and faith subsist
Without these also! Yet, let these be stopped,
Our wages discontinue,—then, indeed,
Our zeal and faith, (we hear on every side,)

Are not released—having been pledged away
I wonder, for what zeal and faith in turn?
Hard money purchased me my place! No, no—
I 'm right, sir—but your wrong is better still,
If I had time and skill to argue it.
Therefore, I say, I 'll serve you, how you please—
If you like,—fight you, as you seem to wish—
(The kinder of me that, in sober truth,
I never dreamed I did you any harm) . . .

Gaucelme. —Or, kinder still, you 'll introduce, no doubt,
His merits to the Prince who 's just at hand,
And let no hint drop he 's made Chancellor
And Chamberlain and Heaven knows what beside!

Clugnet [*to* VALENCE]. You stare, young sir, and threaten! Let me say,
That at your age, when first I came to court,
I was not much above a gentleman;
While now . . .

Valence. —You are Head-Lackey? With your office
I have not yet been graced, sir!

Other Courtiers [*to* CLUGNET]. Let him talk!

Fidelity, disinterestedness,
Excuse so much! Men claim my worship ever
Who staunchly and steadfastly . . .

Enter ADOLF.

Adolf. The Prince arrives.

Courtiers. Ha? How?

Adolf. He leaves his guard a stage behind
At Aix, and enters almost by himself.

1st Courtier. The Prince! This foolish business puts all out.

2nd Courtier. Let Gaucelme speak first!

3rd Courtier. Better I began
About the state of Juliers: should one say
All 's prosperous and inviting him?

4th Courtier. —Or rather,
All s prostrate and imploring him?

5th Courtier. That 's best
Where 's the Cleves' paper, by the way?

4th Courtier [*to* VALENCE]. Sir—sir—
If you 'll but lend that paper—trust it me,
I 'll warrant . . .

5th Courtier. Softly, sir—the Marshal's duty!

Clugnet. Has not the Chamberlain a hearing first
By virtue of his patent?

Gaucelme. Patents?—Duties?
All that, my masters, must begin again!
One word composes the whole controversy:
We 're simply now—the Prince's!

The Others. Ay—the Prince's!

Enter SABYNE.

Sabyne. Adolf! Bid . . . Oh, no time for ceremony!
Where 's whom our lady calls her only subject?
She needs him. Who is here the Duchess's?

Valence [*starting from his reverie*] Most gratefully I follow to her feet.

ACT III.

AFTERNOON.

SCENE.—*The Vestibule.*

Enter PRINCE BERTHOLD *and* MELCHIOR.

Berthold. A thriving little burgh this Juliers looks.
[*Half-apart.*] Keep Juliers, and as good you kept
Cologne:
Better try Aix, though!—
Melchior. Please 't your Highness speak?
Berthold [*as before*]. Aix, Cologne, Frankfort,—Milan;
—Rome!—
Melchior. The Grave.
More weary seems your Highness, I remark,
Than sundry conquerors whose path I 've watched
Through fire and blood to any prize they gain.
I could well wish you, for your proper sake,
Had met some shade of opposition here
—Found a blunt seneschal refuse unlock,
Or a scared usher lead your steps astray.

You must not look for next achievement's palm
So easily: this will hurt your conquering.

Berthold. My next? Ay, as you say, my next and next!

Well, I am tired, that 's truth, and moody too,
This quiet entrance-morning: listen why!
Our little burgh, now, Juliers—'t is indeed
One link, however insignificant,
Of the great chain by which I reach my hope,
—A link I must secure; but otherwise,
You 'd wonder I esteem it worth my grasp.
Just see what life is, with its shifts and turns!
It happens now—this very nook—to be
A place that once . . not a long while since, neither—
When I lived an ambiguous hanger-on
Of foreign courts, and bore my claims about,
Discarded by one kinsman, and the other
A poor priest merely,—then, I say, this place
Shone my ambition's object; to be Duke—
Seemed then, what to be Emperor seems now.
My rights were far from judged as plain and sure
In those days as of late, I promise you:
And 't was my day-dream, Lady Colombe here
Might e'en compound the matter, pity me,
Be struck, say, with my chivalry and grace
(I was a boy!)—bestow her hand at length,

And make me Duke, in her right if not mine.
Here am I, Duke confessed, at Juliers now.
Hearken: if ever I be Emperor,
Remind me what I felt and said to-day!

Melchior. All this consoles a bookish man like me.
—And so will weariness cling to you. Wrong,
Wrong! Had you sought the lady's court yourself,—
Faced the redoubtables composing it,
Flattered this, threatened that man, bribed the other,—
Pleaded by writ and word and deed, your cause,—
Conquered a footing inch by painful inch,—
And, after long years' struggle, pounced at last
On her for prize,—the right life had been lived,
And justice done to divers faculties
Shut in that brow. Yourself were visible
As you stood victor, then; whom now—(your pardon!)
I am forced narrowly to search and see,
So are you hid by helps—this Pope, your uncle—
Your cousin, the other King! You are a mind,—
They, body: too much of mere legs-and-arms
Obstructs the mind so! Match these with their like:
Match mind with mind!

Berthold. And where 's your mind to match?
They show me legs-and-arms to cope withal!
I 'd subjugate this city—where 's its mind?

[*The* Courtiers *enter slowly*

Melchior. Got out of sight when you came troops and all!

And in its stead, here greets you flesh-and-blood:
A smug œconomy of both, this first!

[*As* CLUGNET *bows obsequiously.*

Well done, gout, all considered!—I may go?

Berthold. Help me receive them!

Melchior. Oh, they just will say
What yesterday at Aix their fellows said—
At Treves, the day before! Sir Prince, my friend,
Why do you let your life slip thus?—Meantime,
I have my little Jullers to achieve—
The understanding this tough Platonist,
Your holy uncle disinterred, Amelius:
Lend me a company of horse and foot,
To help me through his tractate—gain my Duchy!

Berthold. And Empire, after that is gained, will be—?

Melchior. To help me through your uncle's comment, Prince! [*Goes.*

Berthold. Ah? Well: he o'er-refines—the scholar's fault!

How do I let my life slip? Say, this life,
I lead now, differs from the common life
Of other men in mere degree, not kind,
Of joys and griefs,—still there is such degree
Mere largeness in a life is something, sure,—

Enough to care about and struggle for,
In this world: for this world, the size of things;
The sort of things, for that to come, no doubt.
A great is better than a little aim:
And when I wooed Priscilla's rosy mouth
And failed so, under that grey convent-wall,
Was I more happy than I should be now
[*By this time, the* Courtiers *are ranged before him.*
If failing of my Empire? Not a whit.
—Here comes the mind, it once had tasked me sore
To baffle, but for my advantages!
All 's best as 't is: these scholars talk and talk.
[*Seats himself.*

The Courtiers. Welcome our Prince to Juliers!—to his heritage!
Our dutifullest service proffer we!

Clugnet. I, please your Highness, having exercised
The function of Grand Chamberlain at court,
With much acceptance, as men testify . . .

Berthold. I cannot greatly thank you, gentlemen!
The Pope declares my claim to the Duchy founded
On strictest justice—you concede it, therefore,
I do not wonder: and the kings my friends
Protest they mean to see such claim enforced,—
You easily may offer to assist.
But there 's a slight discretionary power

To serve me in the matter, you 've had long,
Though late you use it. This is well to say—
But could you not have said it months ago?
I 'm not denied my own Duke's truncheon, true—
'T is flung me—I stoop down, and from the ground
Pick it, with all you placid standers-by:
And now I have it, gems and mire at once,
Grace go with it to my soiled hands, you say!

Guibert. (By Paul, the advocate our doughty friend
Cuts the best figure!)

Gaucelme. If our ignorance
May have offended, sure our loyalty . . .

Berthold. Loyalty? Yours? Oh—of yourselves you speak!
I mean the Duchess all this time, I hope!
And since I have been forced repeat my claims
As if they never had been urged before,
As I began, so must I end, it seems.
The formal answer to the grave demand!
What says the lady?

Courtiers [*one to another*]. *1st Courtier.* Marshal!
2nd Courtier. Orator!

Guibert. A variation of our mistress' way!
Wipe off his boots' dust, Clugnet!—that, he waits!

1st Courtier. Your place!

2nd Courtier. Just now it was your own!

Guibert. The devil's!

Berthold [*to* GUIBERT]. Come forward, friend—you with the paper, there!

Is Juliers the first city I 've obtained?
By this time, I may boast proficiency
In each decorum of the circumstance.
Give it me as she gave it—the petition,
Demand, you style it! What 's required, in brief?
What title's reservation, appanage's
Allowance? I heard all at Treves, last week.

Gaucelme [*to* GUIBERT]. "Give it him as she gave it!"

Guibert. And why not?

[*To* BERTHOLD.] The lady crushed your summons thus together,
And bade me, with the very greatest scorn
So fair a frame could hold, inform you . . .

Courtiers. Stop—

Idiot!

Guibert. —Inform you she denied your claim,
Defied yourself! (I tread upon his heel,
The blustering advocate!)

Berthold. By heaven and earth!
Dare you jest, sir?

Guibert. Did they at Treves, last week?

Berthold [*starting up*]. Why then, I look much bolder than I knew,

And you prove better actors than I thought:
Since, as I live, I took you as you entered
For just so many dearest friends of mine,
Fled from the sinking to the rising power
—The sneaking'st crew, in short, I e'er despised!
Whereas, I am alone here for the moment,
With every soldier left behind at Aix!
Silence? That means the worst? I thought as much!
What follows next then?

Courtiers. Gracious Prince, he raves!

Guibert. He asked the truth and why not get the truth?

Berthold. Am I a prisoner? Speak, will somebody?
—But why stand paltering with imbeciles?
Let me see her, or . . .

Guibert. Her, without her leave,
Shall no one see: she 's Duchess yet!

Courtiers [*footsteps without, as they are disputing*]. Good chance!
She 's here—the Lady Colombe's self!

Berthold. 'T is well!
[*Aside.*] Array a handful thus against my world?
Not ill done, truly! Were not this a mind
To match one's mind with? Colombe! Let us wait!
I failed so, under that grey convent wall!
She comes.

Guibert. The Duchess! Strangers, range yourselves!

[*As the* DUCHESS *enters in conversation with* VALENCE, BERTHOLD *and the* Courtiers *fall back a little.*

The Duchess. Presagefully it beats, presagefully,
My heart: the right is Berthold's and not mine.

Valence. Grant that he has the right, dare I mistrust
Your power to acquiesce so patiently
As you believe, in such a dream-like change
Of fortune—change abrupt, profound, complete?

The Duchess. Ah, the first bitterness is over now!
Bitter I may have felt it to confront
The truth, and ascertain those natures' value
I had so counted on; that was a pang:
But I did bear it, and the worst is over.
Let the Prince take them!

Valence. And take Juliers too?
—Your people without crosses, wands and chains—
Only with hearts?

The Duchess. There I feel guilty, sir!
I cannot give up what I never had:
For I ruled these, not them—these stood between.
Shall I confess, sir? I have heard by stealth
Of Berthold from the first; more news and more:
Closer and closer swam the thundercloud,
But I was safely housed with these, I knew.

At times when to the casement I would turn,
At a bird's passage or a flower-trail's play,
I caught the storm's red glimpses on its edge—
Yet I was sure some one of all these friends
Would interpose: I followed the bird's flight
Or plucked the flower: some one would interpose!

Valence. Not one thought on the People—and Cleves there!

The Duchess. Now, sadly conscious my real sway was missed,
Its shadow goes without so much regret:
Else could I not again thus calmly bid you,
Answer Prince Berthold!

Valence. Then you acquiesce?

The Duchess. Remember over whom it was I ruled!

Guibert [*stepping forward*]. Prince Berthold, yonder, craves an audience, lady!

The Duchess [*to* VALENCE]. I only have to turn, and I shall face
Prince Berthold! Oh, my very heart is sick!
It is the daughter of a line of Dukes
This scornful insolent adventurer
Will bid depart from my dead father's halls!
I shall not answer him—dispute with him—
But, as he bids, depart! Prevent it, sir!
Sir—but a mere day's respite! Urge for me

—What I shall call to mind I should have urged
When time 's gone by : 't will all be mine, you urge !
A day—an hour—that I myself may lay
My rule down ! 'T is too sudden—must not be !
The world 's to hear of it ! Once done—for ever !
How will it read, sir ? How be sung about ?
Prevent it !

Berthold [*approaching*]. Your frank indignation, lady,
Cannot escape me. Overbold I seem ;
But somewhat should be pardoned my surprise
At this reception,—this defiance, rather.
And if, for their and your sake, I rejoice
Your virtues could inspire a trusty few
To make such gallant stand in your behalf,
I cannot but be sorry, for my own,
Your friends should force me to retrace my steps :
Since I no longer am permitted speak
After the pleasant peaceful course prescribed
No less by courtesy than relationship
Which I remember, if you once forgot.
But never must attack pass unrepelled.
Suffer that, through you, I demand of these,
Who controverts my claim to Juliers ?

The Duchess. —Me
You say, you do not speak to—

Berthold. Of your subjects

I ask, then: whom do you accredit? Where
Stand those should answer?

Valence [*advancing*]. The lady is alone.

Berthold. Alone, and thus? So weak and yet so bold?

Valence. I said she was alone—

Berthold. And weak, I said.

Valence. When is man strong until he feels alone?
It was some lonely strength at first, be sure,
Created organs, such as those you seek,
By which to give its varied purpose shape:
And, naming the selected ministrants,
Took sword, and shield, and sceptre,—each, a man!
That strength performed its work and passed its way:
You see our lady: there, the old shapes stand!
—A Marshal, Chamberlain, and Chancellor—
"Be helped their way, into their death put life
"And find advantage!"—so you counsel us.
But let strength feel alone, seek help itself,—
And, as the inland-hatched sea-creature hunts
The sea's breast out,—as, littered 'mid the waves
The desert-brute makes for the desert's joy,
So turns our lady to her true resource,
Passing o'er hollow fictions, worn-out types,
—And I am first her instinct fastens on.
And prompt I say, as clear as heart can speak,

The People will not have you; nor shall have!
It is not merely I shall go bring Cleves
And fight you to the last,—though that does much,
And men and children,—ay, and women too,
Fighting for home, are rather to be feared
Than mercenaries fighting for their pay—
But, say you beat us, since such things have been,
And, where this Juliers laughed, you set your foot
Upon a steaming bloody plash—what then?
Stand you the more our lord that there you stand?
Lord it o'er troops whose force you concentrate,
A pillared flame whereto all ardours tend—
Lord it 'mid priests whose schemes you amplify,
A cloud of smoke 'neath which all shadows brood—
But never, in this gentle spot of earth,
Can you become our Colombe, our play-queen,
For whom, to furnish lilies for her hair,
We 'd pour our veins forth to enrich the soil.
—Our conqueror? Yes!—Our despot? Yes!—Our Duke?
Know yourself, know us!

Berthold [*who has been in thought*]. Know your lady, also!

[*Very deferentially.*]—To whom I needs must exculpate myself
For having made a rash demand, at least.

Wherefore to you, sir, who appear to be
Her chief adviser, I submit my claims, [*Giving papers.*
But, this step taken, take no further step,
Until the Duchess shall pronounce their worth.
Here be our meeting-place; at night, its time:
Till when I humbly take the lady's leave!

[*He withdraws. As the* DUCHESS *turns to* VALENCE, *the* Courtiers *interchange glances and come forward a little.*

1*st Courtier.* So, this was their device!

2*nd Courtier.* No bad device!

3*rd Courtier.* You 'd say they love each other, Guibert's friend
From Cleves, and she, the Duchess!

4*th Courtier.* —And moreover,
That all Prince Berthold comes for, is to help
Their loves!

5*th Courtier.* Pray, Guibert, what is next to do?

Guibert [*advancing*]. I laid my office at the Duchess' foot—

Others. And I—and I—and I!

The Duchess. I took them, sirs.

Guibert [*apart to* VALENCE]. And now, sir, I am simple knight again—
Guibert, of the great ancient house, as yet
That never bore affront; whate'er your birth,—

As things stand now, I recognize yourself
(If you 'll accept experience of some date)
As like to be the leading man o' the time,
Therefore as much above me now, as I
Seemed above you this morning. Then, I offered
To fight you: will you be as generous
And now fight me?

Valence. Ask when my life is mine!

Guibert. ('T is hers now!)

Clugnet [*apart to* VALENCE, *as* GUIBERT *turns from him*]. You, sir, have insulted me
Grossly,—will grant me, too, the selfsame favour
You 've granted him, just now, I make no question?

Valence. I promise you, as him, sir.

Clugnet. Do you so?
Handsomely said! I hold you to it, sir.
You 'll get me reinstated in my office
As you will Guibert!

The Duchess. I would be alone!

[*They begin to retire slowly; as* VALENCE *is about to follow—*

Alone, sir—only with my heart: you stay!

Gaucelme. You hear that? Ah, light breaks upon me! Cleves—
It was at Cleves some man harangued us all—
With great effect,—so those who listened said,

My thoughts being busy elsewhere: was this he?
Guibert,—your strange, disinterested man!
Your uncorrupted, if uncourtly friend!
The modest worth you mean to patronize!
He cares about no Duchesses, not he—
His sole concern is with the wrongs of Cleves!
What, Guibert? What, it breaks on you at last?

Guibert. Would this hall's floor were a mine's roof! I 'd back
And in her very face . . .

Gaucelme. Apply the match
That fired the train,—and where would you be, pray?

Guibert. With him!

Gaucelme. Stand, rather, safe outside with me!
The mine 's charged: shall I furnish you the match
And place you properly? To the antechamber!

Guibert. Can you?

Gaucelme. Try me! Your friend 's in fortune!

Guibert. Quick—
To the antechamber! He is pale with bliss!

Gaucelme. No wonder! Mark her eyes!

Guibert. To the antechamber!

[*The* Courtiers *retire.*

The Duchess. Sir, could you know all you have done for me
You were content! You spoke, and I am saved.

Valence. Be not too sanguine, lady! Ere you dream,
That transient flush of generosity
Fades off, perchance. The man, beside, is gone,—
Him we might bend; but see, the papers here—
Inalterably his requirement stays,
And cold hard words have we to deal with now.
In that large eye there seemed a latent pride,
To self-denial not incompetent,
But very like to hold itself dispensed
From such a grace: however, let us hope!
He is a noble spirit in noble form.
I wish he less had bent that brow to smile
As with the fancy how he could subject
Himself upon occasion to—himself!
From rudeness, violence, you rest secure,
But do not think your Duchy rescued yet!

The Duchess. You,—who have opened a new world to me,
Will never take the faded language up
Of that I leave? My Duchy—keeping it,
Or losing it—is that my sole world now?

Valence. Ill have I spoken if you thence despise
Juliers; although the lowest, on true grounds,
Be worth more than the highest rule, on false:
Aspire to rule, on the true grounds!

The Duchess. Nay, hear—

False, I will never—rash, I would not be!
This is indeed my birthday—soul and body,
Its hours have done on me the work of years.
You hold the requisition: ponder it!
If I have right, my duty 's plain: if he—
Say so, nor ever change a tone of voice!
At night you meet the Prince; meet me at eve!
Till when, farewell! This discomposes you?
Believe in your own nature, and its force
Of renovating mine! I take my stand
Only as under me the earth is firm:
So, prove the first step stable, all will prove.
That first, I choose: [*Laying her hand on his.*]—the next
to take, choose you! [*She withdraws.*
Valence [*after a pause*]. What drew down this on me?
—on me, dead once,
She thus bids live,—since all I hitherto
Thought dead in me, youth's ardours and emprise,
Burst into life before her, as she bids
Who needs them. Whither will this reach, where end?
Her hand's print burns on mine . . . Yet she 's above—
So very far above me! All 's too plain:
I served her when the others sank away,
And she rewards me as such souls reward—
The changed voice, the suffusion of the cheek,
The eye's acceptance, the expressive hand,

—Reward, that 's little, in her generous thought,
Though all to me . . .
I cannot so disclaim
Heaven's gift, nor call it other than it is!
She loves me!
[*Looking at the* Prince's *papers.*]—Which love, these, perchance, forbid.
Can I decide against myself—pronounce
She is the Duchess and no mate for me?
—Cleves, help me! Teach me,—every haggard face,—
To sorrow and endure! I will do right
Whatever be the issue. Help me, Cleves!

ACT IV.

EVENING.

SCENE.—*An Antechamber.*

Enter the Courtiers.

Maufroy. Now, then, that we may speak—how spring this mine?

Gaucelme. Is Guibert ready for its match? He cools! Not so friend Valence with the Duchess there! "Stay, Valence! Are not you my better self?" And her cheek mantled—

Guibert. Well, she loves him, sir: And more,—since you will have it I grow cool,— She 's right: he 's worth it.

Gaucelme. For his deeds to-day? Say so!

Guibert. What should I say beside?

Gaucelme. Not this— For friendship's sake leave this for me to say— That we 're the dupes of an egregious cheat!

This plain unpractised suitor, who found way
To the Duchess through the merest die's turn-up
A year ago, had seen her and been seen,
Loved and been loved.

Guibert. Impossible!

Gaucelme. —Nor say,
How sly and exquisite a trick, moreover,
Was this which—taking not their stand on facts
Boldly, for that had been endurable,
But worming on their way by craft, they choose
Resort to, rather,—and which you and we,
Sheep-like, assist them in the playing-off!
The Duchess thus parades him as preferred,
Not on the honest ground of preference,
Seeing first, liking more, and there an end—
But as we all had started equally,
And at the close of a fair race he proved
The only valiant, sage and loyal man.
Herself, too, with the pretty fits and starts,—
The careless, winning, candid ignorance
Of what the Prince might challenge or forego—
She had a hero in reserve! What risk
Ran she? This deferential easy Prince
Who brings his claims for her to ratify
—He 's just her puppet for the nonce! You 'll see,—
Valence pronounces, as is equitable,

Against him: off goes the confederate:
As equitably, Valence takes her hand!

The Chancellor. You run too fast: her hand, no subject takes.

Do not our archives hold her father's will?
That will provides against such accident,
And gives next heir, Prince Berthold, the reversion
Of Juliers, which she forfeits, wedding so.

Gaucelme. I know that, well as you,—but does the Prince?
Knows Berthold, think you, that this plan, he helps,
For Valence's ennoblement,—would end,
If crowned with the success which seems its due,
In making him the very thing he plays,
The actual Duke of Juliers? All agree
That Colombe's title waived or set aside,
He is next heir.

The Chancellor. Incontrovertibly.

Gaucelme. Guibert, your match, now, to the train!

Guibert. Enough!
I 'm with you: selfishness is best again.
I thought of turning honest—what a dream!
Let 's wake now!

Gaucelme. Selfish, friend, you never were:
'T was but a series of revenges taken
On your unselfishness for prospering ill.

But now that you 're grown wiser, what 's our course?

Guibert. —Wait, I suppose, till Valence weds our lady,
And then, if we must needs revenge ourselves,
Apprise the Prince.

Gaucelme. —The Prince, ere then dismissed
With thanks for playing his mock part so well?
Tell the Prince now, sir! Ay, this very night,
Ere he accepts his dole and goes his way,
Explain how such a marriage makes him Duke,
Then trust his gratitude for the surprise!

Guibert. —Our lady wedding Valence all the same
As if the penalty were undisclosed?
Good! If she loves, she 'll not disown her love,
Throw Valence up. I wonder you see that.

Gaucelme. The shame of it—the suddenness and shame!
Within her, the inclining heart—without,
A terrible array of witnesses—
And Valence by, to keep her to her word,
With Berthold's indignation or disgust!
We 'll try it!—Not that we can venture much.
Her confidence we 've lost for ever: Berthold's
Is all to gain.

Guibert. To-night, then, venture we!
Yet—if lost confidence might be renewed?

Gaucelme. Never in noble natures! With the base
ones,—

Twist off the crab's claw, wait a smarting-while,
And something grows and grows and gets to be
A mimic of the lost joint, just so like
As keeps in mind it never, never will
Replace its predecessor! Crabs do that:
But lop the lion's foot—and . . .

Guibert. To the Prince!

Gaucelme [*aside*]. And come what will to the lion's foot, I pay you,
My cat's-paw, as I long have yearned to pay.
[*Aloud.*] Footsteps! Himself! 'T is Valence breaks on us,
Exulting that their scheme succeeds. We 'll hence—
And perfect ours! Consult the archives, first—
Then, fortified with knowledge, seek the Hall!

Clugnet [*to* GAUCELME *as they retire*]. You have not smiled so since your father died!

As they retire, enter VALENCE *with papers.*

Valence. So must it be! I have examined these
With scarce a palpitating heart—so calm,
Keeping her image almost wholly off,
Setting upon myself determined watch,
Repelling to the uttermost his claims:
And the result is—all men would pronounce
And not I, only, the result to be—

Berthold is heir; she has no shade of right
To the distinction which divided us,
But, suffered to rule first, I know not why,
Her rule connived at by those Kings and Popes,
To serve some devil's-purpose,—now 't is gained,
Whate'er it was, the rule expires as well.
—Valence, this rapture . . . selfish can it be?
Eject it from your heart, her home!—It stays!
Ah, the brave world that opens on us both!
—Do my poor townsmen so esteem it? Cleves,—
I need not your pale faces! This, reward
For service done to you? Too horrible!
I never served you: 't was myself I served—
Nay, served not—rather saved from punishment
Which, had I failed you then, would plague me now.
My life continues yours, and your life, mine.
But if, to take God's gift, I swerve no step—
Cleves! If I breathe no prayer for it—if she,
[*Footsteps without.*
Colombe, that comes now, freely gives herself—
Will Cleves require, that, turning thus to her,
I . . .

Enter Prince BERTHOLD.

Pardon, sir! I did not look for you
Till night, i' the Hall; nor have as yet declared
My judgment to the lady.

Berthold. So I hoped.

Valence. And yet I scarcely know why that should check
The frank disclosure of it first to you—
What her right seems, and what, in consequence,
She will decide on.

Berthold. That I need not ask.

Valence. You need not: I have proved the lady's mind:
And, justice being to do, dare act for her.

Berthold. Doubtless she has a very noble mind.

Valence. Oh, never fear but she 'll in each conjuncture
Bear herself bravely! She no whit depends
On circumstance; as she adorns a throne,
She had adorned . . .

Berthold. A cottage—in what book
Have I read that, of every queen that lived?
A throne! You have not been instructed, sure,
To forestall my request?

Valence. 'T is granted, sir!
My heart instructs me. I have scrutinized
Your claims . . .

Berthold. Ah—claims, you mean, at first preferred?
I come, before the hour appointed me,
To pray you let those claims at present rest,
In favour of a new and stronger one.

Valence. You shall not need a stronger: on the part

O' the lady, all you offer I accept,
Since one clear right suffices: yours is clear.
Propose!

Berthold. I offer her my hand.

Valence. Your hand?

Berthold. A Duke's, yourself say; and, at no far time,
Something here whispers me—an Emperor's.
The lady's mind is noble: which induced
This seizure of occasion ere my claims
Were—settled, let us amicably say!

Valence. Your hand!

Berthold. (He will fall down and kiss it next!)
Sir, this astonishment 's too flattering,
Nor must you hold your mistress' worth so cheap.
Enhance it, rather,--urge that blood is blood—
The daughter of the Burgraves, Landgraves, Markgraves,
Remains their daughter! I shall scarce gainsay.
Elsewhere or here, the lady needs must rule:
Like the imperial crown's great chrysoprase,
They talk of—somewhat out of keeping there,
And yet no jewel for a meaner cap.

Valence. You wed the Duchess?

Berthold. Cry you mercy, friend!
Will the match also influence fortunes here?
A natural solicitude enough.
Be certain, no bad chance it proves for you!

However high you take your present stand,
There 's prospect of a higher still remove—
For Juliers will not be my resting-place,
And, when I have to choose a substitute
To rule the little burgh, I 'll think of you
Who need not give your mates a character.
And yet I doubt your fitness to supplant
The grey smooth Chamberlain: he 'd hesitate
A doubt his lady could demean herself
So low as to accept me. Courage, sir!
I like your method better: feeling's play
Is franker much, and flatters me beside.

Valence. I am to say, you love her?

Berthold. Say that too!

Love has no great concernment, thinks the world,
With a Duke's marriage. How go precedents
In Juliers' story—how use Juliers' Dukes?
I see you have them here in goodly row;
Yon must be Luitpold—ay, a stalwart sire!
Say, I have been arrested suddenly
In my ambition's course, its rocky course,
By this sweet flower: I fain would gather it
And then proceed: so say and speedily
—(Nor stand there like Duke Luitpold's brazen self!)
Enough, sir: you possess my mind, I think.
This is my claim, the others being withdrawn,

And to this be it that, i' the Hall to-night,
Your lady's answer comes; till when, farewell!

[*He retires.*

Valence [*after a pause*]. The heavens and earth stay as they were; my heart
Beats as it beat: the truth remains the truth.
What falls away, then, if not faith in her?
Was it my faith, that she could estimate
Love's value, and, such faith still guiding me,
Dare I now test her? Or grew faith so strong
Solely because no power of test was mine?

Enter the DUCHESS.

The Duchess. My fate, sir! Ah, you turn away. All 's over.
But you are sorry for me? Be not so!
What I might have become, and never was,
Regret with me! What I have merely been,
Rejoice I am no longer! What I seem
Beginning now, in my new state, to be,
Hope that I am!—for, once my rights proved void,
This heavy roof seems easy to exchange
For the blue sky outside—my lot henceforth.

Valence. And what a lot is Berthold's!

The Duchess. How of him?

Valence. He gathers earth's whole good into his arms;

Standing, as man now, stately, strong and wise,
Marching to fortune, not surprised by her.
One great aim, like a guiding-star, above—
Which tasks strength, wisdom, stateliness, to lift
His manhood to the height that takes the prize;
A prize not near—lest overlooking earth
He rashly spring to seize it—nor remote,
So that he rest upon his path content:
But day by day, while shimmering grows shine,
And the faint circlet prophesies the orb,
He sees so much as, just evolving these,
The stateliness, the wisdom and the strength,
To due completion, will suffice this life,
And lead him at his grandest to the grave.
After this star, out of a night he springs;
A beggar's cradle for the throne of thrones
He quits; so, mounting, feels each step he mounts,
Nor, as from each to each exultingly
He passes, overleaps one grade of joy.
This, for his own good:—with the world, each gift
Of God and man,—reality, tradition,
Fancy and fact—so well environ him,
That as a mystic panoply they serve—
Of force, untenanted, to awe mankind,
And work his purpose out with half the world,
While he, their master, dexterously slipt

From such encumbrance, is meantime employed
With his own prowess on the other half.
Thus shall he prosper, every day's success
Adding, to what is he, a solid strength—
An aëry might to what encircles him,
Till at the last, so life's routine lends help,
That as the Emperor only breathes and moves,
His shadow shall be watched, his step or stalk
Become a comfort or a portent, how
He trails his ermine take significance,—
Till even his power shall cease to be most power,
And men shall dread his weakness more, nor dare
Peril their earth its bravest, first and best,
Its typified invincibility.
Thus shall he go on, greatening, till he ends—
The man of men, the spirit of all flesh,
The fiery centre of an earthly world!

The Duchess. Some such a fortune I had dreamed should rise
Out of my own—that is, above my power
Seemed other, greater potencies to stretch—

Valence. For you?

The Duchess. It was not I moved there, I think:
But one I could,—though constantly beside,
And aye approaching,—still keep distant from,
And so adore. 'T was a man moved there.

Valence. Who?

The Duchess. I felt the spirit, never saw the face.

Valence. See it! 'T is Berthold's! He enables you
To realize your vision.

The Duchess. Berthold?

Valence. Duke—
Emperor to be: he proffers you his hand.

The Duchess. Generous and princely!

Valence. He is all of this.

The Duchess. Thanks, Berthold, for my father's sake!
No hand
Degrades me.

Valence. You accept the proffered hand?

The Duchess. That he should love me!

Valence. "Loved" I did not say.
Had that been—love might so incline the Prince
To the world's good, the world that 's at his foot,—
I do not know, this moment, I should dare
Desire that you refused the world—and Cleves—
The sacrifice he asks.

The Duchess. Not love me, sir?

Valence. He scarce affirmed it.

The Duchess. May not deeds affirm?

Valence. What does he? . . . Yes, yes, very much he
does!
All the shame saved, he thinks, and sorrow saved—

Immitigable sorrow, so he thinks,—
Sorrow that 's deeper than we dream, perchance.
The Duchess. Is not this love?
Valence. So very much he does!
For look, you can descend now gracefully:
All doubts are banished, that the world might have,
Or worst, the doubts yourself, in after-time,
May call up of your heart's sincereness now.
To such, reply, "I could have kept my rule—
"Increased it to the utmost of my dreams—
"Yet I abjured it." This, he does for you:
It is munificently much.
The Duchess. Still "much!"
But why is it not love, sir? Answer me!
Valence. Because not one of Berthold's words and looks
Had gone with love's presentment of a flower
To the beloved: because bold confidence,
Open superiority, free pride—
Love owns not, yet were all that Berthold owned:
Because where reason, even, finds no flaw,
Unerringly a lover's instinct may.
The Duchess. You reason, then, and doubt?
Valence. I love, and know.
The Duchess. You love? How strange! I never cast a thought

On that. Just see our selfishness! You seemed
So much my own . . . I had no ground—and yet,
I never dreamed another might divide
My power with you, much less exceed it.

Valence. Lady,
I am yours wholly.

The Duchess. Oh, no, no, not mine!
'T is not the same now, never more can be.
—Your first love, doubtless. Well, what 's gone from me?
What have I lost in you?

Valence. My heart replies—
No loss there! So, to Berthold back again:
This offer of his hand, he bids me make—
Its obvious magnitude is well to weigh.

The Duchess. She 's . . . yes, she must be very fair for you!

Valence. I am a simple advocate of Cleves.

The Duchess. You! With the heart and brain that so helped me,
I fancied them exclusively my own,
Yet find are subject to a stronger sway!
She must be . . . tell me, is she very fair?

Valence. Most fair, beyond conception or belief.

The Duchess. Black eyes?—no matter! Colombe, the world leads

Its life without you, whom your friends professed
The only woman: see how true they spoke!
One lived this while, who never saw your face,
Nor heard your voice—unless . . . Is she from Cleves?
Valence. Cleves knows her well.
The Duchess. Ah—just a fancy, now!
When you poured forth the wrongs of Cleves,—I said,
—Thought, that is, afterward . . .
Valence. You thought of me?
The Duchess. Of whom else? Only such great cause,
I thought,
For such effect: see what true love can do!
Cleves is his love. I almost fear to ask
. . . And will not. This is idling: to our work!
Admit before the Prince, without reserve,
My claims misgrounded; then may follow better
. . . When you poured out Cleves' wrongs impetuously,
Was she in your mind?
Valence. All done was done for her
—To humble me!
The Duchess. She will be proud at least.
Valence. She?
The Duchess. When you tell her.
Valence. That will never be.
The Duchess. How—are there sweeter things you hope
to tell?

No, sir! You counselled me,—I counsel you
In the one point I—any woman—can.
Your worth, the first thing; let her own come next—
Say what you did through her, and she through you—
The praises of her beauty afterward!
Will you?

Valence. I dare not.

The Duchess. Dare not?

Valence. She I love
Suspects not such a love in me.

The Duchess. You jest.

Valence. The lady is above me and away.
Not only the brave form, and the bright mind,
And the great heart, combine to press me low—
But all the world calls rank divides us.

The Duchess. Rank!
Now grant me patience! Here 's a man declares
Oracularly in another's case—
Sees the true value and the false, for them—
Nay, bids them see it, and they straight do see.
You called my court's love worthless—so it turned:
I threw away as dross my heap of wealth,
And here you stickle for a piece or two!
First—has she seen you?

Valence. Yes.

The Duchess. She loves you, then.

Valence. One flash of hope burst; then succeeded night:
And all 's at darkest now. Impossible!

The Duchess. We 'll try: you are—so to speak—my subject yet?

Valence. As ever—to the death.

The Duchess. Obey me, then!

Valence. I must.

The Duchess. Approach her, and . . . no! first of all
Get more assurance. "My instructress," say,
"Was great, descended from a line of kings,
"And even fair"—(wait why I say this folly)—
"She said, of all men, none for eloquence,
"Courage, and (what cast even these to shade)
"The heart they sprung from,—none deserved like him
"Who saved her at her need: if she said this,
"What should not one I love, say?"

Valence. Heaven—this hope—
Oh, lady, you are filling me with fire!

The Duchess. Say this!—nor think I bid you cast aside
One touch of all the awe and reverence;
Nay, make her proud for once to heart's content
That all this wealth of heart and soul 's her own!
Think you are all of this,—and, thinking it,
. . . (Obey!)

Valence. I cannot choose.

The Duchess. Then, kneel to her!

[VALENCE *sinks on his knee.*

I dream!

Valence. Have mercy! Yours, unto the death,—
I have obeyed. Despise, and let me die!

The Duchess. Alas, sir, is it to be ever thus?
Even with you as with the world? I know
This morning's service was no vulgar deed
Whose motive, once it dares avow itself,
Explains all done and infinitely more,
So, takes the shelter of a nobler cause.
Your service named its true source,—loyalty!
The rest 's unsaid again. The Duchess bids you,
Rise, sir! The Prince's words were in debate.

Valence [*rising*]. Rise? Truth, as ever, lady, comes from you!
I should rise—I who spoke for Cleves, can speak
For Man—yet tremble now, who stood firm then.
I laughed—for 't was past tears—that Cleves should starve
With all hearts beating loud the infamy,
And no tongue daring trust as much to air:
Yet here, where all hearts speak, shall I be mute?
Oh, lady, for your own sake look on me!
On all I am, and have, and do—heart, brain,

Body and soul,—this Valence and his gifts!
I was proud once: I saw you, and they sank,
So that each, magnified a thousand times,
Were nothing to you—but such nothingness,
Would a crown gild it, or a sceptre prop,
A treasure speed, a laurel-wreath enhance?
What is my own desert? But should your love
Have . . . there 's no language helps here . . . singled me,—
Then—oh, that wild word "then!"—be just to love,
In generosity its attribute!
Love, since you pleased to love! All 's cleared—a stage
For trial of the question kept so long:
Judge you—Is love or vanity the best?
You, solve it for the world's sake—you, speak first
What all will shout one day—you, vindicate
Our earth and be its angel! All is said.
Lady, I offer nothing—I am yours:
But, for the cause' sake, look on me and him,
And speak!

The Duchess. I have received the Prince's message:
Say, I prepare my answer!

Valence. Take me, Cleves!

[*He withdraws.*

The Duchess. Mournful—that nothing 's what it calls itself!

Devotion, zeal, faith, loyalty—mere love!
And, love in question, what may Berthold's be?
I did ill to mistrust the world so soon:
Already was this Berthold at my side.
The valley-level has its hawks no doubt:
May not the rock-top have its eagles, too?
Yet Valence . . . let me see his rival then!

ACT V.

NIGHT.

SCENE.—*The Hall.*

Enter BERTHOLD *and* MELCHIOR.

Melchior. And here you wait the matter's issue?
Berthold. Here.
Melchior. I don't regret I shut Amelius, then.
But tell me, on this grand disclosure,—how
Behaved our spokesman with the forehead?
Berthold. Oh,
Turned out no better than the foreheadless—
Was dazzled not so very soon, that 's all!
For my part, this is scarce the hasty showy
Chivalrous measure you give me credit of.
Perhaps I had a fancy,—but 't is gone.
—Let her commence the unfriended innocent
And carry wrongs about from court to court?
No, truly! The least shake of fortune's sand,
—My uncle-Pope chokes in a coughing fit,
King-cousin takes a fancy to blue eyes,—

And wondrously her claims would brighten up ;
Forth comes a new gloss on the ancient law,
O'er-looked provisoes, o'er-past premises,
Follow in plenty. No : 't is the safe step.
The hour beneath the convent-wall is lost :
Juliers and she, once mine, are ever mine.

Melchior. Which is to say, you, losing heart already,
Elude the adventure.

Berthold. Not so—or, if so—
Why not confess at once that I advise
None of our kingly craft and guild just now
To lay, one moment, down their privilege
With the notion they can any time at pleasure
Retake it : that may turn out hazardous.
We seem, in Europe, pretty well at end
O' the night, with our great masque : those favoured few
Who keep the chamber's top, and honour's chance
Of the early evening, may retain their place
And figure as they list till out of breath.
But it is growing late : and I observe
A dim grim kind of tipstaves at the doorway
Not only bar new-comers entering now,
But caution those who left, for any cause,
And would return, that morning draws too near ;
The ball must die off, shut itself up. We—
I think, may dance lights out and sunshine in,

And sleep off headache on our frippery:
But friend the other, who cunningly stole out,
And, after breathing the fresh air outside,
Means to re-enter with a new costume,
Will be advised go back to bed, I fear.
I stick to privilege, on second thoughts.

Melchior. Yes—you evade the adventure: and, beside,
Give yourself out for colder than you are.
King Philip, only, notes the lady's eyes?
Don't they come in for somewhat of the motive
With you too?

Berthold. Yes—no: I am past that now.
Gone 't is: I cannot shut my soul to fact.
Of course, I might by forethought and contrivance
Reason myself into a rapture. Gone:
And something better come instead, no doubt.

Melchior. So be it! Yet, all the same, proceed my way,
Though to your ends; so shall you prosper best!
The lady,—to be won for selfish ends,—
Will be won easier my unselfish . . . call it,
Romantic way.

Berthold. Won easier?

Melchior. Will not she?

Berthold. There I profess humility without bound:
Ill cannot speed—not I—the Emperor.

Melchior. And I should think the Emperor best waived,

From your description of her mood and way.
You could look, if it pleased you, into hearts;
But are too indolent and fond of watching
Your own—you know that, for you study it.

Berthold. Had you but seen the orator her friend,
So bold and voluble an hour before,
Abashed to earth at aspect of the change!
Make her an Empress? Ah, that changed the case!
Oh, I read hearts! 'T is for my own behoof,
I court her with my true worth: wait the event!
I learned my final lesson on that head
When years ago,—my first and last essay—
Before the priest my uncle could by help
Of his superior, raise me from the dirt—
Priscilla left me for a Brabant lord
Whose cheek was like the topaz on his thumb.
I am past illusion on that score.

Melchior. Here comes
The lady—

Berthold. —And there you go. But do not! Give me
Another chance to please you! Hear me plead!

Melchior. You 'll keep, then, to the lover, to the man?

Enter the DUCHESS—*followed by* ADOLF *and* SABYNE *and, after an interval, by the* Courtiers.

Berthold. Good auspice to our meeting!

The Duchess. May it prove!
—And you, sir, will be Emperor one day?

Berthold. (Ay, that 's the point!) I may be Emperor.

The Duchess. 'T is not for my sake only, I am proud
Of this you offer: I am prouder far
That from the highest state should duly spring
The highest, since most generous, of deeds.

Berthold. (Generous—still that!) You underrate yourself.
You are, what I, to be complete, must gain—
Find now, and may not find, another time.
While I career on all the world for stage,
There needs at home my representative.

The Duchess. —Such, rather, would some warrior-woman be—
One dowered with lands and gold, or rich in friends—
One like yourself.

Berthold. Lady, I am myself,
And have all these: I want what 's not myself,
Nor has all these. Why give one hand two swords?
Here 's one already: be a friend's next gift
A silk glove, if you will—I have a sword.

The Duchess. You love me, then?

Berthold. Your lineage I revere,
Honour your virtue, in your truth believe,

Do homage to your intellect, and bow
Before your peerless beauty.

The Duchess. But, for love—

Berthold. A further love I do not understand.
Our best course is to say these hideous truths,
And see them, once said, grow endurable:
Like waters shuddering from their central bed,
Black with the midnight bowels of the earth,
That, once up-spouted by an earthquake's throe,
A portent and a terror—soon subside,
Freshen apace, take gold and rainbow hues
In sunshine, sleep in shadow, and at last
Grow common to the earth as hills or trees—
Accepted by all things they came to scare.

The Duchess. You cannot love, then?

Berthold. —Charlemagne, perhaps!
Are you not over-curious in love-lore?

The Duchess. I have become so, very recently.
It seems, then, I shall best deserve esteem,
Respect, and all your candour promises,
By putting on a calculating mood—
Asking the terms of my becoming yours?

Berthold. Let me not do myself injustice, neither.
Because I will not condescend to fictions
That promise what my soul can ne'er acquit,
It does not follow that my guarded phrase

May not include far more of what you seek,
Than wide profession of less scrupulous men.
You will be Empress, once for all: with me
The Pope disputes supremacy—you stand,
And none gainsays, the earth's first woman.
The Duchess. That—
Or simple Lady of Ravestein again?
Berthold. The matter 's not in my arbitrament:
Now I have made my claims—which I regret—
Cede one, cede all.
The Duchess. This claim then, you enforce?
Berthold. The world looks on.
The Duchess. And when must I decide?
Berthold. When, lady? Have I said thus much so promptly
For nothing?—Poured out, with such pains, at once
What I might else have suffered to ooze forth
Droplet by droplet in a lifetime long—
For aught less than as prompt an answer, too?
All 's fairly told now: who can teach you more?
The Duchess. I do not see him.
Berthold. I shall ne'er deceive
This offer should be made befittingly
Did time allow the better setting forth
The good of it, with what is not so good,
Advantage, and disparagement as well:

But as it is, the sum of both must serve.
I am already weary of this place;
My thoughts are next stage on to Rome. Decide!
The Empire—or,—not even Juliers now!
Hail to the Empress—farewell to the Duchess!

[*The* Courtiers, *who have been drawing nearer and nearer, interpose.*

Gaucelme. —"Farewell," Prince? when we break in at our risk—

Clugnet. Almost upon court-licence trespassing—

Gaucelme. —To point out how your claims are valid yet!
You know not, by the Duke her father's will,
The lady, if she weds beneath her rank,
Forfeits her Duchy in the next heir's favour—
So 't is expressly stipulate. And if
It can be shown 't is her intent to wed
A subject, then yourself, next heir, by right
Succeed to Juliers.

Berthold. What insanity?—

Guibert. Sir, there 's one Valence, the pale fiery man
You saw and heard this morning—thought, no doubt,
Was of considerable standing here:
I put it to your penetration, Prince,
If aught save love, the truest love for her
Could make him serve the lady as he did!
He 's simply a poor advocate of Cleves

—Creeps here with difficulty, finds a place
With danger, gets in by a miracle,
And for the first time meets the lady's face—
So runs the story: is that credible?
For, first—no sooner in, than he 's apprised
Fortunes have changed; you are all-powerful here,
The lady as powerless: he stands fast by her!

The Duchess [*aside*]. And do such deeds spring up from love alone?

Guibert. But here occurs the question, does the lady
Love him again? I say, how else can she?
Can she forget how he stood singly forth
In her defence, dared outrage all of us,
Insult yourself—for what, save love's reward?

The Duchess [*aside*]. And is love then the sole reward of love?

Guibert. But, love him as she may and must—you ask,
Means she to wed him? "Yes," both natures answer!
Both, in their pride, point out the sole result;
Nought less would he accept nor she propose.
For each conjecture was she great enough
—Will be, for this.

Clugnet. Though, now that this is known,
Policy, doubtless, urges she deny . . .

The Duchess. —What, sir, and wherefore?—since I am not sure

That all is any other than you say!
You take this Valence, hold him close to me,
Him with his actions: can I choose but look?
I am not sure, love trulier shows itself
Than in this man, you hate and would degrade,
Yet, with your worst abatement, show me thus.
Nor am I—(thus made look within myself,
Ere I had dared)—now that the look is dared—
Sure that I do not love him!

Guibert. Hear you, Prince?

Berthold. And what, sirs, please you, may this prattle mean
Unless to prove with what alacrity
You give your lady's secrets to the world?
How much indebted, for discovering
That quality, you make me, will be found
When there 's a keeper for my own to seek.

Courtiers. "Our lady?"

Berthold. —She assuredly remains.

The Duchess. Ah, Prince—and you too can be generous?
You could renounce your power, if this were so,
And let me, as these phrase it, wed my love
Yet keep my Duchy? You perhaps exceed
Him, even, in disinterestedness!

Berthold. How, lady, should all this affect my purpose?

Your will and choice are still as ever, free.
Say, you have known a worthier than myself
In mind and heart, of happier form and face —
Others must have their birthright: I have gifts.
To balance theirs, not blot them out of sight.
Against a hundred alien qualities,
I lay the prize I offer. I am nothing:
Wed you the Empire?

The Duchess. And my heart away?

Berthold. When have I made pretension to your heart?

I give none. I shall keep your honour safe;
With mine I trust you, as the sculptor trusts
Yon marble woman with the marble rose,
Loose on her hand, she never will let fall,
In graceful, slight, silent security.
You will be proud of my world-wide career,
And I content in you the fair and good.
What were the use of planting a few seeds
The thankless climate never would mature—
Affections all repelled by circumstance?
Enough: to these no credit I attach,
To what you own, find nothing to object.
Write simply on my requisition's face
What shall content my friends—that you admit,
As Colombe of Ravestein, the claims therein,

Or never need admit them, as my wife—
And either way, all 's ended!

The Duchess. Let all end!

Berthold. The requisition!

Guibert. —Valence holds, of course!

Berthold. Desire his presence! [ADOLF *goes out.*

Courtiers [*to each other*]. Out it all comes yet;
He 'll have his word against the bargain yet;
He 's not the man to tamely acquiesce.
One passionate appeal—upbraiding even,
May turn the tide again. Despair not yet!

[*They retire a little.*

Berthold [*to* MELCHIOR]. The Empire has its old success, my friend!

Melchior. You 've had your way: before the spokesman speaks,
Let me, but this once, work a problem out,
And ever more be dumb! The Empire wins?
To better purpose have I read my books!

Enter VALENCE.

Melchior [*to the* Courtiers]. Apart, my masters!
[*To* VALENCE.] Sir, one word with you!
I am a poor dependant of the Prince's—
Pitched on to speak, as of slight consequence.
You are no higher, I find: in other words,

We two, as probably the wisest here,
Need not hold diplomatic talk like fools.
Suppose I speak, divesting the plain fact
Of all their tortuous phrases, fit for them?
Do you reply so, and what trouble saved!
The Prince, then—an embroiled strange heap of news
This moment reaches him—if true or false,
All dignity forbids he should inquire
In person, or by worthier deputy;
Yet somehow must inquire, lest slander come:
And so, 't is I am pitched on. You have heard
His offer to your lady?

Valence. Yes.

Melchior. —Conceive
Her joy thereat?

Valence. I cannot.

Melchior. No one can.
All draws to a conclusion, therefore.

Valence [*aside*]. So!
No after-judgment—no first thought revised—
Her first and last decision!—me, she leaves,
Takes him; a simple heart is flung aside,
The ermine o'er a heartless breast embraced.
Oh Heaven, this mockery has been played too oft!
Once, to surprise the angels—twice, that fiends
Recording, might be proud they chose not so—

Thrice, many thousand times, to teach the world
All men should pause, misdoubt their strength, since men
Can have such chance yet fail so signally,
—But ever, ever this farewell to Heaven,
Welcome to earth—this taking death for life—
This spurning love and kneeling to the world—
Oh Heaven, it is too often and too old!

Melchior. Well, on this point, what but an absurd rumour
Arises—these, its source—its subject, you!
Your faith and loyalty misconstruing,
They say, your service claims the lady's hand!
Of course, nor Prince nor lady can respond:
Yet something must be said: for, were it true
You made such claim, the Prince would . . .

Valence. Well, sir,—would?

Melchior. —Not only probably withdraw his suit.
But, very like, the lady might be forced
Accept your own. Oh, there are reasons why!
But you 'll excuse at present all save one,—
I think so. What we want is, your own witness,
For, or against—her good, or yours: decide!

Valence [*aside*]. Be it her good if she accounts it so!
[*After a contest.*] For what am I but hers, to choose as she?
Who knows how far, beside, the light from her
May reach, and dwell with, what she looks upon?

Melchior [*to the* Prince]. Now to him, you!

Berthold [*to* VALENCE]. My friend acquaints you, sir,
The noise runs . . .

Valence. —Prince, how fortunate are you,
Wedding her as you will, in spite of noise,
To show belief in love! Let her but love you,
All else you disregard! What else can be?
You know how love is incompatible
With falsehood—purifies, assimilates
All other passions to itself.

Melchior. Ay, sir:
But softly! Where, in the object we select,
Such love is, perchance, wanting?

Valence. Then indeed,
What is it you can take?

Melchior. Nay, ask the world!
Youth, beauty, virtue, an illustrious name,
An influence o'er mankind.

Valence. When man perceives . . .
—Ah, I can only speak as for myself!

The Duchess. Speak for yourself!

Valence. May I?—no, I have spoken,
And time 's gone by. Had I seen such an one,
As I loved her—weighing thoroughly that word—
So should my task be to evolve her love:
If for myself!—if for another—well.

Berthold. Heroic truly! And your sole reward,—
The secret pride in yielding up love's right?

Valence. Who thought upon reward? And yet how much
Comes after—oh, what amplest recompense!
Is the knowledge of her, nought? the memory, nought?
——Lady, should such an one have looked on you,
Ne'er wrong yourself so far as quote the world
And say, love can go unrequited here!
You will have blessed him to his whole life's end—
Low passions hindered, baser cares kept back,
All goodness cherished where you dwelt—and dwell.
What would he have? He holds you—you, both form
And mind, in his,—where self-love makes such room
For love of you, he would not serve you now
The vulgar way,—repulse your enemies,
Win you new realms, or best, to save the old
Die blissfully—that 's past so long ago!
He wishes you no need, thought, care of him—
Your good, by any means, himself unseen,
Away, forgotten!—He gives that life's task up,
As it were . . . but this charge which I return—
[*Offers the requisition, which she takes.*
Wishing your good.

The Duchess [*having subscribed it*]. And opportunely, sir—
Since at a birthday's close, like this of mine,

Good wishes gentle deeds reciprocate.
Most on a wedding-day, as mine is too,
Should gifts be thought of: yours comes first by right.
Ask of me!

Berthold. He shall have whate'er he asks,
For your sake and his own.

Valence [*aside*]. If I should ask—
The withered bunch of flowers she wears—perhaps,
One last touch of her hand, I never more
Shall see!

[*After a pause, presenting his paper to the* Prince.
Cleves' Prince, redress the wrongs of Cleves!

Berthold. I will, sir!

The Duchess [*as* VALENCE *prepares to retire*]. —Nay,
do out your duty, first!
You bore this paper; I have registered
My answer to it: read it and have done!

[VALENCE *reads it*

I take him—give up Juliers and the world.
This is my Birthday.

Melchior. Berthold, my one hero
Of the world she gives up, one friend worth my books,
Sole man I think it pays the pains to watch,—
Speak, for I know you through your Popes and Kings!

Berthold [*after a pause*]. Lady, well rewarded! Sir,
as well deserved!

I could not imitate—I hardly envy—
I do admire you. All is for the best.
Too costly a flower were this, I see it now,
To pluck and set upon my barren helm
To wither—any garish plume will do.
I 'll not insult you and refuse your Duchy—
You can so well afford to yield it me,
And I were left, without it, sadly lorn.
As it is—for me—if that will flatter you,
A somewhat wearier life seems to remain
Than I thought possible where . . . 'faith, their life
Begins already! They 're too occupied
To listen: and few words content me best.
[*Abruptly to the* Courtiers.] I am your Duke, though!
Who obey me here?
The Duchess. Adolf and Sabyne follow us—
Guibert [*starting from the* Courtiers]. —And I?
Do I not follow them, if I may n't you?
Shall not I get some little duties up
At Ravestein and emulate the rest?
God save you, Gaucelme! 'T is my Birthday, too!
Berthold. You happy handful that remain with me
. . That is, with Dietrich the black Barnabite
I shall leave over you—will earn your wages
Or Dietrich has forgot to ply his trade!
Meantime,—go copy me the precedents

Of every installation, proper styles
And pedigrees of all your Juliers' Dukes—
While I prepare to plod on my old way,
And somewhat wearily, I must confess!

The Duchess [*with a light joyous laugh as she turns from them*]. Come, Valence, to our friends, God's earth . . .

Valence [*as she falls into his arms*]. —And thee!

MEN AND WOMEN.

MEN AND WOMEN.

184–, 185–.

"*TRANSCENDENTALISM: A POEM IN TWELVE BOOKS.*"

STOP playing, poet! May a brother speak?
'T is you speak, that 's your error. Song 's our art:
Whereas you please to speak these naked thoughts
Instead of draping them in sights and sounds.
—True thoughts, good thoughts, thoughts fit to treasure up!
But why such long prolusion and display,
Such turning and adjustment of the harp,
And taking it upon your breast, at length,
Only to speak dry words across its strings?
Stark-naked thought is in request enough:
Speak prose and hollo it till Europe hears!
The six-foot Swiss tube, braced about with bark,
Which helps the hunter's voice from Alp to Alp—
Exchange our harp for that,—who hinders you?

But here 's your fault; grown men want thought, you think;
Thought 's what they mean by verse, and seek in verse.
Boys seek for images and melody,
Men must have reason—so, you aim at men.
Quite otherwise! Objects throng our youth, 't is true;
We see and hear and do not wonder much:
If you could tell us what they mean, indeed!
As German Boehme never cared for plants
Until it happed, a-walking in the fields,
He noticed all at once that plants could speak,
Nay, turned with loosened tongue to talk with him.
That day the daisy had an eye indeed—
Colloquized with the cowslip on such themes!
We find them extant yet in Jacob's prose.
But by the time youth slips a stage or two
While reading prose in that tough book he wrote
(Collating and emendating the same
And settling on the sense most to our mind),
We shut the clasps and find life's summer past.
Then, who helps more, pray, to repair our loss—
Another Boehme with a tougher book
And subtler meanings of what roses say,—
Or some stout Mage like him of Halberstadt,
John, who made things Boehme wrote thoughts about?
He with a "look you!" vents a brace of rhymes,

And in there breaks the sudden rose herself,
Over us, under, round us every side,
Nay, in and out the tables and the chairs
And musty volumes, Boehme's book and all,—
Buries us with a glory, young once more,
Pouring heaven into this shut house of life.

So come, the harp back to your heart again!
You are a poem, though your poem 's naught.
The best of all you showed before, believe,
Was your own boy-face o'er the finer chords
Bent, following the cherub at the top
That points to God with his paired half-moon wings.

HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY.

I ONLY knew one poet in my life:
And this, or something like it, was his way.

You saw go up and down Valladolid,
A man of mark, to know next time you saw.
His very serviceable suit of black
Was courtly once and conscientious still,
And many might have worn it, though none did:
The cloak, that somewhat shone and showed the threads,
Had purpose, and the ruff, significance.
He walked and tapped the pavement with his cane,
Scenting the world, looking it full in face,
An old dog, bald and blindish, at his heels.
They turned up, now, the alley by the church,
That leads nowhither; now, they breathed themselves
On the main promenade just at the wrong time:
You 'd come upon his scrutinizing hat,
Making a peaked shade blacker than itself
Against the single window spared some house

Intact yet with its mouldered Moorish work,—
Or else surprise the ferrel of his stick
Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the chinks
Of some new shop a-building, French and fine.
He stood and watched the cobbler at his trade,
The man who slices lemons into drink,
The coffee-roaster's brazier, and the boys
That volunteer to help him turn its winch.
He glanced o'er books on stalls with half an eye,
And fly-leaf ballads on the vendor's string,
And broad-edge bold-print posters by the wall.
He took such cognizance of men and things,
If any beat a horse, you felt he saw;
If any cursed a woman, he took note;
Yet stared at nobody,—you stared at him,
And found, less to your pleasure than surprise,
He seemed to know you and expect as much.
So, next time that a neighbour's tongue was loosed,
It marked the shameful and notorious fact,
We had among us, not so much a spy,
As a recording chief-inquisitor,
The town's true master if the town but knew!
We merely kept a governor for form,
While this man walked about and took account
Of all thought, said and acted, then went home,
And wrote it fully to our Lord the King

Who has an itch to know things, he knows why,
And reads them in his bedroom of a night.
Oh, you might smile! there wanted not a touch,
A tang of . . . well, it was not wholly ease
As back into your mind the man's look came.
Stricken in years a little,—such a brow
His eyes had to live under!—clear as flint
On either side the formidable nose
Curved, cut and coloured like an eagle's claw.
Had he to do with A.'s surprising fate?
When altogether old B. disappeared
And young C. got his mistress,—was 't our friend,
His letter to the King, that did it all?
What paid the bloodless man for so much pains?
Our Lord the King has favourites manifold,
And shifts his ministry some once a month;
Our city gets new governors at whiles,—
But never word or sign, that I could hear,
Notified to this man about the streets
The King's approval of those letters conned
The last thing duly at the dead of night.
Did the man love his office? Frowned our Lord,
Exhorting when none heard—"Beseech me not!
"Too far above my people,—beneath me!
"I set the watch,—how should the people know?
"Forget them, keep me all the more in mind!'

Was some such understanding 'twixt the two?

I found no truth in one report at least—
That if you tracked him to his home, down lanes
Beyond the Jewry, and as clean to pace,
You found he ate his supper in a room
Blazing with lights, four Titians on the wall,
And twenty naked girls to change his plate!
Poor man, he lived another kind of life
In that new stuccoed third house by the bridge,
Fresh-painted, rather smart than otherwise!
The whole street might o'erlook him as he sat,
Leg crossing leg, one foot on the dog's back,
Playing a decent cribbage with his maid
(Jacynth, you 're sure her name was) o'er the cheese
And fruit, three red halves of starved winter-pears,
Or treat of radishes in April. Nine,
Ten, struck the church clock, straight to bed went he.

My father, like the man of sense he was,
Would point him out to me a dozen times;
"'St—'St," he 'd whisper, "the Corregidor!"
I had been used to think that personage
Was one with lacquered breeches, lustrous belt,
And feathers like a forest in his hat,
Who blew a trumpet and proclaimed the news,

Announced the bull-fights, gave each church its turn,
And memorized the miracle in vogue!
He had a great observance from us boys;
We were in error; that was not the man.

I 'd like now, yet had haply been afraid,
To have just looked, when this man came to die,
And seen who lined the clean gay garret-sides
And stood about the neat low truckle-bed,
With the heavenly manner of relieving guard.
Here had been, mark, the general-in-chief,
Thro' a whole campaign of the world's life and death,
Doing the King's work all the dim day long,
In his old coat and up to knees in mud,
Smoked like a herring, dining on a crust,—
And, now the day was won, relieved at once!
No further show or need for that old coat,
You are sure, for one thing! Bless us, all the while
How sprucely we are dressed out, you and I!
A second, and the angels alter that.
Well, I could never write a verse,—could you?
Let 's to the Prado and make the most of time.

ARTEMIS PROLOGIZES.

I AM a goddess of the ambrosial courts,
And save by Here, Queen of Pride, surpassed
By none whose temples whiten this the world.
Through heaven I roll my lucid moon along;
I shed in hell o'er my pale people peace;
On earth I, caring for the creatures, guard
Each pregnant yellow wolf and fox-bitch sleek,
And every feathered mother's callow brood,
And all that love green haunts and loneliness.
Of men, the chaste adore me, hanging crowns
Of poppies red to blackness, bell and stem,
Upon my image at Athenai here;
And this dead Youth, Asclepios bends above,
Was dearest to me. He, my buskined step
To follow through the wild-wood leafy ways,
And chase the panting stag, or swift with darts
Stop the swift ounce, or lay the leopard low,
Neglected homage to another god:
Whence Aphrodite, by no midnight smoke

Of tapers lulled, in jealousy despatched
A noisome lust that, as the gadbee stings,
Possessed his stepdame Phaidra for himself
The son of Theseus her great absent spouse.
Hippolutos exclaiming in his rage
Against the fury of the Queen, she judged
Life insupportable; and, pricked at heart
An Amazonian stranger's race should dare
To scorn her, perished by the murderous cord:
Yet, ere she perished, blasted in a scroll
The fame of him her swerving made not swerve.
And Theseus, read, returning, and believed,
And exiled, in the blindness of his wrath,
The man without a crime who, last as first,
Loyal, divulged not to his sire the truth.
Now Theseus from Poseidon had obtained
That of his wishes should be granted three,
And one he imprecated straight—"Alive
"May ne'er Hippolutos reach other lands!"
Poseidon heard, ai ai! And scarce the prince
Had stepped into the fixed boots of the car
That give the feet a stay against the strength
Of the Henetian horses, and around
His body flung the rein, and urged their speed
Along the rocks and shingles of the shore,
When from the gaping wave a monster flung

His obscene body in the coursers' path.
These, mad with terror, as the sea-bull sprawled
Wallowing about their feet, lost care of him
That reared them; and the master-chariot-pole
Snapping beneath their plunges like a reed,
Hippolutos, whose feet were trammelled fast,
Was yet dragged forward by the circling rein
Which either hand directed; nor they quenched
The frenzy of their flight before each trace,
Wheel-spoke and splinter of the woeful car,
Each boulder-stone, sharp stub and spiny shell,
Huge fish-bone wrecked and wreathed amid the sands
On that detested beach, was bright with blood
And morsels of his flesh: then fell the steeds
Head-foremost, crashing in their mooned fronts,
Shivering with sweat, each white eye horror-fixed.
His people, who had witnessed all afar,
Bore back the ruins of Hippolutos.
But when his sire, too swoln with pride, rejoiced
(Indomitable as a man foredoomed)
That vast Poseidon had fulfilled his prayer,
I, in a flood of glory visible,
Stood o'er my dying votary and, deed
By deed, revealed, as all took place, the truth.
Then Theseus lay the woefullest of men,
And worthily; but ere the death-veils hid

His face, the murdered prince full pardon breathed
To his rash sire. Whereat Athenai wails.

So I, who ne'er forsake my votaries,
Lest in the cross-way none the honey-cake
Should tender, nor pour out the dog's hot life;
Lest at my fane the priests disconsolate
Should dress my image with some faded poor
Few crowns, made favours of, nor dare object
Such slackness to my worshippers who turn
Elsewhere the trusting heart and loaded hand,
As they had climbed Olumpos to report
Of Artemis and nowhere found her throne—
I interposed: and, this eventful night,—
(While round the funeral pyre the populace
Stood with fierce light on their black robes which bound
Each sobbing head, while yet their hair they clipped
O'er the dead body of their withered prince,
And, in his palace, Theseus prostrated
On the cold hearth, his brow cold as the slab
'T was bruised on, groaned away the heavy grief—
As the pyre fell, and down the cross logs crashed
Sending a crowd of sparkles through the night,
And the gay fire, elate with mastery,
Towered like a serpent o'er the clotted jars
Of wine, dissolving oils and frankincense,

And splendid gums like gold),—my potency
Conveyed the perished man to my retreat
In the thrice-venerable forest here.
And this white-bearded sage who squeezes now
The berried plant, is Phoibos' son of fame,
Asclepios, whom my radiant brother taught
The doctrine of each herb and flower and root,
To know their secret'st virtue and express
The saving soul of all: who so has soothed
With lavers the torn brow and murdered cheeks,
Composed the hair and brought its gloss again,
And called the red bloom to the pale skin back,
And laid the strips and jagged ends of flesh
Even once more, and slacked the sinew's knot
Of every tortured limb—that now he lies
As if mere sleep possessed him underneath
These interwoven oaks and pines. Oh cheer,
Divine presenter of the healing rod,
Thy snake, with ardent throat and lulling eye,
Twines his lithe spires around! I say, much cheer!
Proceed thou with thy wisest pharmacies!
And ye, white crowd of woodland sister-nymphs,
Ply, as the sage directs, these buds and leaves
That strew the turf around the twain! While I
Await, in fitting silence, the event.

AN EPISTLE

CONTAINING THE

STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN.

KARSHISH, the picker-up of learning's crumbs,
The not-incurious in God's handiwork
(This man's-flesh he hath admirably made,
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,
To coop up and keep down on earth a space
That puff of vapour from his mouth, man's soul)
—To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,
Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,
Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks
Befall the flesh through too much stress and strain,
Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip
Back and rejoin its source before the term,—
And aptest in contrivance (under God)
To baffle it by deftly stopping such:—
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home
Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with peace)

Three samples of true snakestone—rarer still,
One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,
(But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than drugs)
And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho:
Thus I resume. Who studious in our art
Shall count a little labour unrepaid?
I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone
On many a flinty furlong of this land.
Also, the country-side is all on fire
With rumours of a marching hitherward:
Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.
A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear;
Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls:
I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.
Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,
And once a town declared me for a spy;
But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,
Since this poor covert where I pass the night,
This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence
A man with plague-sores at the third degree
Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laughest here!
'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,
To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip
And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.

A viscid choler is observable
In tertians, I was nearly bold to say;
And falling-sickness hath a happier cure
Than our school wots of: there 's a spider here
Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,
Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey back;
Take five and drop them . . but who knows his mind,
The Syrian runagate I trust this to?
His service payeth me a sublimate
Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.
Best wait: I reach Jerusalem at morn,
There set in order my experiences,
Gather what most deserves, and give thee all—
Or I might add, Judæa's gum-tragacanth
Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained,
Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,
In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease
Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy—
Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar—
But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay: my Syrian blinketh gratefully,
Protesteth his devotion is my price—
Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal?
I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,
What set me off a-writing first of all.

An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang!
For, be it this town's barrenness—or else
The Man had something in the look of him—
His case has struck me far more than 't is worth.
So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose
In the great press of novelty at hand
The care and pains this somehow stole from me)
I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,
Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the truth?
The very man is gone from me but now,
Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.
Thus then, and let thy better wit help all!

'T is but a case of mania—subinduced
By epilepsy, at the turning-point
Of trance prolonged unduly some three days:
When, by the exhibition of some drug
Or spell, exorcization, stroke of art
Unknown to me and which 't were well to know,
The evil thing out-breaking all at once
Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,—
But, flinging (so to speak) life's gates too wide,
Making a clear house of it too suddenly,
The first conceit that entered might inscribe
Whatever it was minded on the wall
So plainly at that vantage, as it were,

(First come, first served) that nothing subsequent
Attaineth to erase those fancy-scrawls
The just-returned and new-established soul
Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart
That henceforth she will read or these or none.
And first—the man's own firm conviction rests
That he was dead (in fact they buried him)
—That he was dead and then restored to life
By a Nazarene physician of his tribe:
—'Sayeth, the same bade "Rise," and he did rise.
"Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry.
Not so this figment!—not, that such a fume,
Instead of giving way to time and health,
Should eat itself into the life of life,
As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all!
For see, how he takes up the after-life.
The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,
Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,
The body's habit wholly laudable,
As much, indeed, beyond the common health
As he were made and put aside to show.
Think, could we penetrate by any drug
And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,
And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep!
Whence has the man the balm that brightens all?
This grown man eyes the world now like a child.

Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,
Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,
To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,
Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the case,—
He listened not except I spoke to him,
But folded his two hands and let them talk,
Watching the flies that buzzed: and yet no fool.
And that 's a sample how his years must go.
Look, if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,
Should find a treasure,—can he use the same
With straitened habits and with tastes starved small,
And take at once to his impoverished brain
The sudden element that changes things,
That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand
And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust?
Is he not such an one as moves to mirth—
Warily parsimonious, when no need,
Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times?
All prudent counsel as to what befits
The golden mean, is lost on such an one:
The man's fantastic will is the man's law.
So here—we call the treasure knowledge, say,
Increased beyond the fleshly faculty—
Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven:
The man is witless of the size, the sum,

The value in proportion of all things,
Or whether it be little or be much.
Discourse to him of prodigious armaments
Assembled to besiege his city now,
And of the passing of a mule with gourds—
'T is one! Then take it on the other side,
Speak of some trifling fact,—he will gaze rapt
With stupor at its very littleness,
(Far as I see) as if in that indeed
He caught prodigious import, whole results;
And so will turn to us the bystanders
In ever the same stupor (note this point)
That we too see not with his opened eyes.
Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,
Preposterously, at cross purposes.
Should his child sicken unto death,—why, look
For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,
Or pretermission of the daily craft!
While a word, gesture, glance from that same child
At play or in the school or laid asleep,
Will startle him to an agony of fear,
Exasperation, just as like. Demand
The reason why—"'t is but a word," object—
"A gesture"—he regards thee as our lord
Who lived there in the pyramid alone,
Looked at us (dost thou mind?) when, being young,

We both would unadvisedly recite
Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,
Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst
All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.
Thou and the child have each a veil alike
Thrown o'er your heads, from under which ye both
Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match
Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know!
He holds on firmly to some thread of life—
(It is the life to lead perforcedly)
Which runs across some vast distracting orb
Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—
The spiritual life around the earthly life:
The law of that is known to him as this,
His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.
So is the man perplext with impulses
Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,
Proclaiming what is right and wrong across,
And not along, this black thread through the blaze—
"It should be" baulked by "here it cannot be."
And oft the man's soul springs into his face
As if he saw again and heard again
His sage that bade him "Rise" and he did rise.
Something, a word, a tick o' the blood within
Admonishes: then back he sinks at once

To ashes, who was very fire before,
In sedulous recurrence to his trade
Whereby he earneth him the daily bread;
And studiously the humbler for that pride,
Professedly the faultier that he knows
God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.
Indeed the especial marking of the man
Is prone submission to the heavenly will—
Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.
'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last
For that same death which must restore his being
To equilibrium, body loosening soul
Divorced even now by premature full growth:
He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live
So long as God please, and just how God please.
He even seeketh not to please God more
(Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.
Hence, I perceive not he affects to preach
The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be,
Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do:
How can he give his neighbour the real ground,
His own conviction? Ardent as he is—
Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old
"Be it as God please" reassureth him.
I probed the sore as thy disciple should:
"How, beast," said I, "this stolid carelessness

"Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march
"To stamp out like a little spark thy town,
"Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once?"
He merely looked with his large eyes on me.
The man is apathetic, you deduce?
Contrariwise, he loves both old and young,
Able and weak, affects the very brutes
And birds – how say I? flowers of the field –
As a wise workman recognizes tools
In a master's workshop, loving what they make.
Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb:
Only impatient, let him do his best,
At ignorance and carelessness and sin—
An indignation which is promptly curbed:
As when in certain travel I have feigned
To be an ignoramus in our art
According to some preconceived design,
And happed to hear the land's practitioners
Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,
Prattle fantastically on disease,
Its cause and cure—and I must hold my peace!

Thou wilt object—Why have I not ere this
Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene
Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the source,
Conferring with the frankness that befits?

Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech
Perished in a tumult many years ago,
Accused,—our learning's fate,—of wizardry,
Rebellion, to the setting up a rule
And creed prodigious as described to me.
His death, which happened when the earthquake fell
(Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss
To occult learning in our lord the sage
Who lived there in the pyramid alone)
Was wrought by the mad people – that 's their wont!
On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,
To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—
How could he stop the earthquake? That 's their way!
The other imputations must be lies:
But take one, though I loathe to give it thee,
In mere respect for any good man's fame.
(And after all, our patient Lazarus
Is stark mad; should we count on what he says?
Perhaps not: though in writing to a leech
'T is well to keep back nothing of a case.)
This man so cured regards the curer, then,
As—God forgive me! who but God himself,
Creator and sustainer of the world,
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!
—'Sayeth that such an one was born and lived,
Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,

Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,
And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat,
And must have so avouched himself, in fact,
In hearing of this very Lazarus
Who saith—but why all this of what he saith?
Why write of trivial matters, things of price
Calling at every moment for remark?
I noticed on the margin of a pool
Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,
Which, now that I review it, needs must seem
Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth!
Nor I myself discern in what is writ
Good cause for the peculiar interest
And awe indeed this man has touched me with.
Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness
Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus:
I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills
Like an old lion's cheek teeth. Out there came
A moon made like a face with certain spots
Multiform, manifold and menacing:
Then a wind rose behind me. So we met
In this old sleepy town at unaware,
The man and I. I send thee what is writ.

Regard it as a chance, a matter risked
To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose,
Or steal, or give it thee with equal good.
Jerusalem's repose shall make amends
For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine:
Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell!

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—
So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!
"Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
"Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine,
"But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
"And thou must love me who have died for thee!"
The madman saith He said so: it is strange.

JOHANNES AGRICOLA IN MEDITATION.

THERE 's heaven above, and night by night
I look right through its gorgeous roof;
No suns and moons though e'er so bright
Avail to stop me; splendour-proof
I keep the broods of stars aloof:
For I intend to get to God,
For 't is to God I speed so fast,
For in God's breast, my own abode,
Those shoals of dazzling glory, passed,
I lay my spirit down at last.
I lie where I have always lain,
God smiles as he has always smiled;
Ere suns and moons could wax and wane.
Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled
The heavens, God thought on me his child:
Ordained a life for me, arrayed
Its circumstances every one
To the minutest; ay, God said

This head this hand should rest upon
Thus, ere he fashioned star or sun.
And having thus created me,
Thus rooted me, he bade me grow,
Guiltless for ever, like a tree
That buds and blooms, nor seeks to know
The law by which it prospers so:
But sure that thought and word and deed
All go to swell his love for me,
Me, made because that love had need
Of something irreversibly
Pledged solely its content to be.
Yes, yes, a tree which must ascend,
No poison-gourd foredoomed to stoop.
I have God's warrant, could I blend
All hideous sins, as in a cup,
To drink the mingled venoms up;
Secure my nature will convert
The draught to blossoming gladness fast:
While sweet dews turn to the gourd's hurt,
And bloat, and while they bloat it, blast,
As from the first its lot was cast.
For as I lie, smiled on, full-fed
By unexhausted power to bless,
I gaze below on hell's fierce bed,

And those its waves of flame oppress,
Swarming in ghastly wretchedness;
Whose life on earth aspired to be
One altar-smoke, so pure!—to win
If not love like God's love for me,
At least to keep his anger in;
And all their striving turned to sin.
Priest, doctor, hermit, monk grown white
With prayer, the broken-hearted nun,
The martyr, the wan acolyte,
The incense-swinging child,—undone
Before God fashioned star or sun!
God, whom I praise; how could I praise,
If such as I might understand,
Make out and reckon on his ways,
And bargain for his love, and stand,
Paying a price, at his right hand?

PICTOR IGNOTUS.

FLORENCE, 15—.

I COULD have painted pictures like that youth's
  Ye praise so. How my soul springs up! No bar
Stayed me—ah, thought which saddens while it soothes!
  —Never did fate forbid me, star by star,
To outburst on your night with all my gift
  Of fires from God: nor would my flesh have shrunk
From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift
  And wide to heaven, or, straight like thunder, sunk
To the centre, of an instant; or around
  Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan
The licence and the limit, space and bound,
  Allowed to truth made visible in man.
And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,
  Over the canvas could my hand have flung,
Each face obedient to its passion's law,
  Each passion clear proclaimed without a tongue;
Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,
  A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,
Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her brood

Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its place;
Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,
And locked the mouth fast, like a castle braved,—
O human faces, hath it spilt, my cup?
What did ye give me that I have not saved?
Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how well!)
Of going—I, in each new picture,—forth,
As, making new hearts beat and bosoms swell,
To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South, or North,
Bound for the calmly-satisfied great State,
Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,
Flowers cast upon the car which bore the freight,
Through old streets named afresh from the event,
Till it reached home, where learned age should greet
My face, and youth, the star not yet distinct
Above his hair, lie learning at my feet!
Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked
With love about, and praise, till life should end,
And then not go to heaven, but linger here,
Here on my earth, earth's every man my friend,
The thought grew frightful, 't was so wildly dear!
But a voice changed it. Glimpses of such sights
Have scared me, like the revels through a door
Of some strange house of idols at its rites!
This world seemed not the world it was before:
Mixed with my loving trusting ones, there trooped
. . . Who summoned those cold faces that begun

To press on me and judge me? Though I stooped
Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun,
They drew me forth, and spite of me . . . enough!
These buy and sell our pictures, take and give,
Count them for garniture and household-stuff,
And where they live needs must our pictures live
And see their faces, listen to their prate,
Partakers of their daily pettiness,
Discussed of,—"This I love, or this I hate,
"This likes me more, and this affects me less!"
Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles
My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint
These endless cloisters and eternal aisles
With the same series, Virgin, Babe and Saint,
With the same cold calm beautiful regard,—
At least no merchant traffics in my heart;
The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward
Vain tongues from where my pictures stand apart:
Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine
While, blackening in the daily candle-smoke,
They moulder on the damp wall's travertine,
'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke.
So, die my pictures! surely, gently die!
O youth, men praise so,—holds their praise its worth?
Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden cry?
Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth?

FRA LIPPO LIPPI.

I AM poor brother Lippo, by your leave!
You need not clap your torches to my face.
Zooks, what 's to blame? you think you see a monk!
What, 't is past midnight, and you go the rounds,
And here you catch me at an alley's end
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar?
The Carmine 's my cloister: hunt it up,
Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,
And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,
Weke, weke, that 's crept to keep him company!
Aha, you know your betters! Then, you 'll take
Your hand away that 's fiddling on my throat,
And please to know me likewise. Who am I?
Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
Three streets off—he 's a certain . . . how d' ye call?
Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,
I' the house that caps the corner. Boh! you were best!
Remember and tell me, the day you 're hanged,
How you affected such a gullet's-gripe!

But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves
Pick up a manner nor discredit you:
Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets
And count fair prize what comes into their net?
He 's Judas to a tittle, that man is!
Just such a face! Why, sir, you make amends.
Lord, I 'm not angry! Bid your hangdogs go
Drink out this quarter-florin to the health
Of the munificent House that harbours me
(And many more beside, lads! more beside!)
And all 's come square again. I 'd like his face—
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door
With the pike and lantern,—for the slave that holds
John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair
With one hand ("Look you, now," as who should say)
And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!
It 's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,
A wood-coal or the like? or you should see!
Yes, I 'm the painter, since you style me so.
What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,
You know them and they take you? like enough!
I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—
'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.
Let 's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.
Here 's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands
To roam the town and sing out carnival,

And I 've been three weeks shut within my mew,
A-painting for the great man, saints and saints
And saints again. I could not paint all night –
Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whifts of song,—
Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!
Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?
Flower o' the thyme—and so on. Round they went.
Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter
Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight, – three slim shapes,
And a face that looked up . . zooks, sir, flesh and blood,
That 's all I 'm made of! Into shreds it went,
Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
All the bed-furniture—a dozen knots,
There was a ladder! Down I let myself,
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,
And after them. I came up with the fun
Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow, well met,—
Flower o' the rose,
If I 've been merry, what matter who knows?
And so as I was stealing back again
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep

Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work
On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,
You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!
Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head—
Mine 's shaved—a monk, you say—the sting 's in that!
If Master Cosimo announced himself,
Mum 's the word naturally; but a monk!
Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now!
I was a baby when my mother died
And father died and left me in the street.
I starved there, God knows how, a year or two
On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,
Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,
My stomach being empty as your hat,
The wind doubled me up and down I went.
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,
(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)
And so along the wall, over the bridge,
By the straight cut to the convent. Six words there,
While I stood munching my first bread that month:
"So, boy, you 're minded," quoth the good fat father
Wiping his own mouth, 't was refection-time,—
"To quit this very miserable world?
"Will you renounce" . . . "the mouthful of bread?"
thought I;

By no means! Brief, they made a monk of me;
I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,
Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house,
Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici
Have given their hearts to—all at eight years old.
Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
'T was not for nothing—the good bellyful,
The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,
And day-long blessed idleness beside!
"Let 's see what the urchin 's fit for"—that came next.
Not overmuch their way, I must confess.
Such a to-do! They tried me with their books:
Lord, they 'd have taught me Latin in pure waste!
Flower o' the clove,
All the Latin I construe is, "amo" I love!
But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets
Eight years together, as my fortune was,
Watching folk's faces to know who will fling
The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,
And who will curse or kick him for his pains,—
Which gentleman processional and fine,
Holding a candle to the Sacrament,
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
The droppings of the wax to sell again,
Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped,—
How say I?—nay, which dog bites, which lets drop

His bone from the heap of offal in the street,—
Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,
He learns the look of things, and none the less
For admonition from the hunger-pinch.
I had a store of such remarks, be sure,
Which, after I found leisure, turned to use.
I drew men's faces on my copy-books,
Scrawled them within the antiphonary's marge,
Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,
Found eyes and nose and chin for A's and B's,
And made a string of pictures of the world
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,
On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked black.
" Nay," quoth the Prior, " turn him out, d' ye say?
" In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.
" What if at last we get our man of parts,
" We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese
" And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine
" And put the front on it that ought to be! "
And hereupon he bade me daub away.
Thank you! my head being crammed, the walls a blank,
Never was such prompt disemburdening.
First, every sort of monk, the black and white,
I drew them, fat and lean: then, folk at church,
From good old gossips waiting to confess

Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends,—
To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there
With the little children round him in a row
Of admiration, half for his beard and half
For that white anger of his victim's son
Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
Signing himself with the other because of Christ
(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
After the passion of a thousand years)
Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head,
(Which the intense eyes looked through) came at eve
On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,
Her pair of earrings and a bunch of flowers
(The brute took growling), prayed, and so was gone.
I painted all, then cried "'T is ask and have;
"Choose, for more 's ready!"—laid the ladder flat,
And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.
The monks closed in a circle and praised loud
Till checked, taught what to see and not to see,
Being simple bodies,—"That 's the very man!
"Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!
"That woman 's like the Prior's niece who comes
"To care about his asthma: it 's the life!"
But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funked;
Their betters took their turn to see and say:

The Prior and the learned pulled a face
And stopped all that in no time. "How? what 's here?
"Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!
"Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true
"As much as pea and pea! it 's devil's-game!
"Your business is not to catch men with show,
"With homage to the perishable clay,
"But lift them over it, ignore it all,
"Make them forget there 's such a thing as flesh.
"Your business is to paint the souls of men—
"Man's soul, and it 's a fire, smoke . . . no, it 's not . .
"It 's vapour done up like a new-born babe—
"(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
"It 's . . . well, what matters talking, it 's the soul!
"Give us no more of body than shows soul!
"Here 's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God,
"That sets us praising,—why not stop with him?
"Why put all thoughts of praise out of our head
"With wonder at lines, colours, and what not?
"Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!
"Rub all out, try at it a second time.
"Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,
"She 's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say,—
"Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off!
"Have it all out!" Now, is this sense, I ask?
A fine way to paint soul, by painting body

So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white
When what you put for yellow 's simply black,
And any sort of meaning looks intense
When all beside itself means and looks nought.
Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty
You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?
Suppose I 've made her eyes all right and blue,
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them threefold?
Or say there 's beauty with no soul at all—
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)
If you get simple beauty and nought else,
You get about the best thing God invents:
That 's somewhat: and you 'll find the soul you have missed,
Within yourself, when you return him thanks.
"Rub all out!" Well, well, there 's my life, in short,
And so the thing has gone on ever since.
I 'm grown a man no doubt, I 've broken bounds:
You should not take a fellow eight years old

And make him swear to never kiss the girls.
I 'm my own master, paint now as I please—
Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house!
Lord, it 's fast holding by the rings in front—
Those great rings serve more purposes than just
To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!
And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
The heads shake still—" It 's art's decline, my son!
" You 're not of the true painters, great and old;
" Brother Angelico 's the man, you 'll find;
" Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer:
" Fag on at flesh, you 'll never make the third!"
Flower o' the pine,
You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I 'll stick to mine!
I 'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!
Don't you think they 're the likeliest to know,
They with their Latin? So, I swallow my rage,
Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint
To please them—sometimes do and sometimes don't;
For, doing most, there 's pretty sure to come
A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints –
A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—
(*Flower o' the peach,*
Death for us all, and his own life for each!)
And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,

The world and life 's too big to pass for a dream,
And I do these wild things in sheer despite,
And play the fooleries you catch me at,
In pure rage! The old mill-horse, out at grass
After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,
Although the miller does not preach to him
The only good of grass is to make chaff.
What would men have? Do they like grass or no—
May they or mayn't they? all I want 's the thing
Settled for ever one way. As it is,
You tell too many lies and hurt yourself:
You don't like what you only like too much,
You do like what, if given you at your word,
You find abundantly detestable.
For me, I think I speak as I was taught;
I always see the garden and God there
A-making man's wife: and, my lesson learned,
The value and significance of flesh,
I can't unlearn ten minutes afterwards,

You understand me: I 'm a beast, I know.
But see, now—why, I see as certainly
As that the morning-star 's about to shine,
What will hap some day. We 've a youngster here
Comes to our convent, studies what I do,
Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop:

His name is Guidi—he 'll not mind the monks—
They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk—
He picks my practice up—he 'll paint apace,
I hope so – though I never live so long,
I know what 's sure to follow. You be judge!
You speak no Latin more than I, belike,
However, you 're my man, you 've seen the world
—The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises,—and God made it all!
—For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
The mountain round it and the sky above,
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
These are the frame to? What 's it all about?
To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at? oh, this last of course!—you say.
But why not do as well as say, paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
God's works—paint anyone, and count it crime
To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works
"Are here already; nature is complete:
"Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)
"There 's no advantage! you must beat her, then."
For, don't you mark? we 're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed

Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,
Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,
And trust me but you should, though! How much
more,
If I drew higher things with the same truth!
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves! This world 's no blot for us,
Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
"Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer!"
Strikes in the Prior: "when your meaning 's plain
"It does not say to folk remember matins,
"Or, mind you fast next Friday!" Why, for this
What need of art at all? A skull and bones,
Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or, what 's best,
A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
I painted a Saint Laurence six months since
At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style:
"How looks my painting, now the scaffold 's down?"
I ask a brother: "Hugely," he returns -

" Already not one phiz of your three slaves
" Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
" But 's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,
" The pious people have so eased their own
" With coming to say prayers there in a rage:
" We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
" Expect another job this time next year,
" For pity and religion grow i' the crowd
" Your painting serves its purpose!" Hang the fools!

—That is—you 'll not mistake an idle word
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,
Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!
Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me, now!
It 's natural a poor monk out of bounds
Should have his apt word to excuse himself:
And hearken how I plot to make amends.
I have bethought me: I shall paint a piece
. . . There 's for you! Give me six months, then go, see
Something in Sant' Ambrogio's! Bless the nuns!
They want a cast o' my office. I shall paint
God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
Ringed by a bowery flowery angel-brood,
Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet

As puff on puff of grated orris-root
When ladies crowd to Church at midsummer.
And then i' the front, of course a saint or two—
Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,
Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white
The convent's friends and gives them a long day,
And Job, I must have him there past mistake,
The man of Uz (and Us without the z,
Painters who need his patience). Well, all these
Secured at their devotion, up shall come
Out of a corner when you least expect,
As one by a dark stair into a great light,
Music and talking, who but Lippo! I!—
Mazed, motionless and moonstruck—I 'm the man!
Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear?
I, caught up with my monk's-things by mistake,
My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,
I, in this presence, this pure company!
Where 's a hole, where 's a corner for escape?
Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing
Forward, puts out a soft palm—"Not so fast!"
—Addresses the celestial presence, "nay—
" He made you and devised you, after all,
" Though he 's none of you! Could Saint John there
draw—
" His camel-hair make up a painting-brush?

"We come to brother Lippo for all that,
"*Iste perfecit opus!*" So, all smile—
I shuffle sideways with my blushing face
Under the cover of a hundred wings
Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you 're gay
And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,
Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off
To some safe bench behind, not letting go
The palm of her, the little lily thing
That spoke the good word for me in the nick,
Like the Prior's niece . . Saint Lucy, I would say.
And so all 's saved for me, and for the church
A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence!
Your hand, sir, and good-bye: no lights, no lights!
The street 's hushed, and I know my own way back,
Don't fear me! There 's the grey beginning. Zooks!

ANDREA DEL SARTO.

(CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER.")

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
I 'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?
Oh, I 'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love!
I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work

Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this!
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve
For each of the five pictures we require:
It saves a model. So! keep looking so—
My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds!
—How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet—
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
Which everybody looks on and calls his,
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks—no one's: very dear, no less.
You smile? why, there 's my picture ready made,
There 's what we painters call our harmony!
A common greyness silvers everything,—
All in a twilight, you and I alike
—You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That 's gone you know),—but I, at every point;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There 's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
That length of convent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease,

And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead;
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!
I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!
This chamber for example—turn your head—
All that 's behind us! You don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,
But you can hear at least when people speak:
And that cartoon, the second from the door
—It is the thing, Love! so such things should be—
Behold Madonna!—I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge,
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate 't is easy, all of it!
No sketches first, no studies, that 's long past:
I do what many dream of, all their lives,
—Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do,

And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,—
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
(I know his name, no matter)—so much less!
Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.
There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that 's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
The sudden blood of these men! at a word—
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that?
Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what 's a heaven for? All is silver-grey
Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!
I know both what I want and what might gain,
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
"Had I been two, another and myself,
"Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt.
Yonder 's a work now, of that famous youth
The Urbinate who died five years ago.
('T is copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
Above and through his art—for it gives way;
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
He means right—that, a child may understand.
Still, what an arm! and I could alter it:
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you!
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think—
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,

And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
"God and the glory! never care for gain.
"The present by the future, what is that?
"Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo!
"Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!"
I might have done it for you. So it seems:
Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.
Beside, incentives come from the soul's self;
The rest avail not. Why do I need you?
What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?
In this world, who can do a thing, will not;
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:
Yet the will 's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
'T is safer for me, if the award be strict,
That I am something underrated here,
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
The best is when they pass and look aside;
But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.

Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden look,—
One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
I painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
This in the background, waiting on my work,
To crown the issue with a last reward!
A good time, was it not, my kingly days?
And had you not grown restless . . . but I know—
'T is done and past; 't was right, my instinct said;
Too live the life grew, golden and not grey,
And I' m the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.
How could it end in any other way?
You called me, and I came home to your heart.
The triumph was—to reach and stay there; since
I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?

Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,
You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!
"Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;
"The Roman's is the better when you pray,
"But still the other's Virgin was his wife—"
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows
My better fortune, I resolve to think.
For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .
(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
Too lifted up in heart because of it)
"Friend, there 's a certain sorry little scrub
"Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,
"Who, were he set to plan and execute
"As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
"Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!"
To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong.
I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!
Ay, but the soul! he 's Rafael! rub it out!
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
(What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?
Do you forget already words like those?)

If really there was such a chance, so lost,—
Is, whether you 're—not grateful—but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now; there 's a star;
Morello 's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.
Come from the window, love,—come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with!
Let us but love each other. Must you go?
That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans?
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
While hand and eye and something of a heart
Are left me, work 's my ware, and what 's it worth?
I 'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit

The grey remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint, were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,
Not yours this time! I want you at my side
To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,
And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
What 's better and what 's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!
Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
The very wrong to Francis!—it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
My father and my mother died of want.
Well, had I riches of my own? you see

How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:
And I have laboured somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good son
Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!
No doubt, there 's something strikes a balance. Yes,
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
This must suffice me here. What would one have?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance —
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,
While I have mine! So—still they overcome
Because there 's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH.

ROME, 15—.

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity!
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not! Well—
She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!
What 's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world 's a dream.
Life, how and what is it? As here I lie
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" Peace, peace seems all.
Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know:
—Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care;

Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same!
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam 's sure to lurk:
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
With those nine columns round me, two and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands:
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.
—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,
Put me where I may look at him! True peach,
Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!
Draw close: that conflagration of my church
—What then? So much was saved if aught were missed!
My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
Drop water gently till the surface sink,
And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not, I! . . .
Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft,
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,

Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst!
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black—
'T was ever antique-black I meant! How else
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath?
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables . . . but I know
Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!
'T is jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve

My bath must needs be left behind, alas!
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There 's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs?
—That 's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
Tully, my masters? Ulpian serves his need!
And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,
And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work:
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals and priests,

Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
—Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best!
Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope
My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my soul,
Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me, there!
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it! Stone—
Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world!
Well go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,

But in a row: and, going, turn your backs
–Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for peace,
That I may watch at leisure if he leers –
Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was!

BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY.

No more wine? then we 'll push back chairs and talk.
A final glass for me, though: cool, i' faith!
We ought to have our Abbey back, you see.
It 's different, preaching in basilicas,
And doing duty in some masterpiece
Like this of brother Pugin's, bless his heart!
I doubt if they 're half baked, those chalk rosettes,
Ciphers and stucco-twiddlings everywhere;
It 's just like breathing in a lime-kiln: eh?
These hot long ceremonies of our church
Cost us a little—oh, they pay the price,
You take me—amply pay it! Now, we 'll talk.

So, you despise me, Mr. Gigadibs.
No deprecation,—nay, I beg you, sir!
Beside 't is our engagement: don't you know,
I promised, if you 'd watch a dinner out,
We 'd see truth dawn together?—truth that peeps
Over the glasses' edge when dinner 's done,

And body gets its sop and holds its noise
And leaves soul free a little. Now 's the time:
Truth's break of day! You do despise me then.
And if I say, "despise me," —never fear!
I know you do not in a certain sense—
Not in my arm-chair, for example: here,
I well imagine you respect my place
(*Status*, *entourage*, worldly circumstance)
Quite to its value—very much indeed:
—Are up to the protesting eyes of you
In pride at being seated here for once—
You 'll turn it to such capital account!
When somebody, through years and years to come,
Hints of the bishop,—names me—that 's enough:
"Blougram? I knew him"—(into it you slide)
"Dined with him once, a Corpus Christi Day,
"All alone, we two; he 's a clever man:
"And after dinner,—why, the wine you know,—
"Oh, there was wine, and good!—what with the wine . .
"'Faith, we began upon all sorts of talk!
"He 's no bad fellow, Blougram; he had seen
"Something of mine he relished, some review:
"He 's quite above their humbug in his heart,
"Half-said as much, indeed— the thing 's his trade.
"I warrant, Blougram 's sceptical at times:
"How otherwise? I liked him, I confess!"

Che che, my dear sir, as we say at Rome,
Don't you protest now! It 's fair give and take;
You have had your turn and spoken your home-truths:
The hand 's mine now, and here you follow suit.

Thus much conceded, still the first fact stays—
You do despise me; your ideal of life
Is not the bishop's: you would not be I.
You would like better to be Goethe, now,
Or Buonaparte, or, bless me, lower still,
Count D'Orsay,—so you did what you preferred,
Spoke as you thought, and, as you cannot help,
Believed or disbelieved, no matter what,
So long as on that point, whate'er it was,
You loosed your mind, were whole and sole yourself.
—That, my ideal never can include,
Upon that element of truth and worth
Never be based! for say they make me Pope—
(They can't—suppose it for our argument!)
Why, there I 'm at my tether's end, I 've reached
My height, and not a height which pleases you:
An unbelieving Pope won't do, you say.
It 's like those eerie stories nurses tell,
Of how some actor on a stage played Death,
With pasteboard crown, sham orb and tinselled dart,
And called himself the monarch of the world;

Then, going in the tire-room afterward,
Because the play was done, to shift himself,
Got touched upon the sleeve familiarly,
The moment he had shut the closet door,
By Death himself. Thus God might touch a Pope
At unawares, ask what his baubles mean,
And whose part he presumed to play just now.
Best be yourself, imperial, plain and true!

So, drawing comfortable breath again,
You weigh and find, whatever more or less
I boast of my ideal realized
Is nothing in the balance when opposed
To your ideal, your grand simple life,
Of which you will not realize one jot.
I am much, you are nothing; you would be all,
I would be merely much: you beat me there.

No, friend, you do not beat me: hearken why!
The common problem, yours, mine, every one's,
Is—not to fancy what were fair in life
Provided it could be,—but, finding first
What may be, then find how to make it fair
Up to our means: a very different thing!
No abstract intellectual plan of life
Quite irrespective of life's plainest laws,

But one, a man, who is man and nothing more,
May lead within a world which (by your leave)
Is Rome or London, not Fool's-paradise.
Embellish Rome, idealize away,
Make paradise of London if you can,
You 're welcome, nay, you 're wise.

A simile!
We mortals cross the ocean of this world
Each in his average cabin of a life;
The best 's not big, the worst yields elbow-room.
Now for our six months' voyage—how prepare?
You come on shipboard with a landsman's list
Of things he calls convenient: so they are!
An India screen is pretty furniture,
A piano-forte is a fine resource,
All Balzac's novels occupy one shelf,
The new edition fifty volumes long;
And little Greek books, with the funny type
They get up well at Leipsic, fill the next:
Go on! slabbed marble, what a bath it makes!
And Parma's pride, the Jerome, let us add!
'T were pleasant could Correggio's fleeting glow
Hang full in face of one where'er one roams,
Since he more than the others brings with him
Italy's self,—the marvellous Modenese!—

Yet was not on your list before, perhaps.
—Alas, friend, here 's the agent . . . is 't the name?
The captain, or whoever 's master here—
You see him screw his face up; what 's his cry
Ere you set foot on shipboard? "Six feet square!"
If you won't understand what six feet mean,
Compute and purchase stores accordingly—
And if, in pique because he overhauls
Your Jerome, piano, bath, you come on board
Bare—why, you cut a figure at the first
While sympathetic landsmen see you off;
Not afterward, when long ere half seas over,
You peep up from your utterly naked boards
Into some snug and well-appointed berth,
Like mine for instance (try the cooler jug—
Put back the other, but don't jog the ice!)
And mortified you mutter "Well and good;
"He sits enjoying his sea-furniture;
"'T is stout and proper, and there 's store of it:
"Though I 've the better notion, all agree,
"Of fitting rooms up. Hang the carpenter,
"Neat ship-shape fixings and contrivances—
"I would have brought my Jerome, frame and all!"
And meantime you bring nothing: never mind—
You 've proved your artist-nature: what you don't
You might bring, so despise me, as I say.

Now come, let 's backward to the starting-place.
See my way: we 're two college friends, suppose.
Prepare together for our voyage, then;
Each note and check the other in his work,—
Here 's mine, a bishop's outfit; criticize!
What 's wrong? why won't you be a bishop too?

Why first, you don't believe, you don't and can't,
(Not statedly, that is, and fixedly
And absolutely and exclusively)
In any revelation called divine.
No dogmas nail your faith; and what remains
But say so, like the honest man you are?
First, therefore, overhaul theology!
Nay, I too, not a fool, you please to think,
Must find believing every whit as hard:
And if I do not frankly say as much,
The ugly consequence is clear enough.

Now wait, my friend: well, I do not believe—
If you 'll accept no faith that is not fixed,
Absolute and exclusive, as you say.
You 're wrong—I mean to prove it in due time.
Meanwhile, I know where difficulties lie
I could not, cannot solve, nor ever shall,
So give up hope accordingly to solve—

(To you, and over the wine). Our dogmas then
With both of us, though in unlike degree,
Missing full credence—overboard with them!
I mean to meet you on your own premise:
Good, there go mine in company with yours!

And now what are we? unbelievers both,
Calm and complete, determinately fixed
To-day, to-morrow and for ever, pray?
You 'll guarantee me that? Not so, I think!
In no wise! all we 've gained is, that belief,
As unbelief before, shakes us by fits,
Confounds us like its predecessor. Where 's
The gain? how can we guard our unbelief,
Make it bear fruit to us?—the problem here.
Just when we are safest, there 's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
And that 's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
Round the ancient idol, on his base again,—
The grand Perhaps! We look on helplessly.
There the old misgivings, crooked questions are—
This good God,—what he could do, if he would,

Would, if he could—then must have done long since:
If so, when, where and how? some way must be,—
Once feel about, and soon or late you hit
Some sense, in which it might be, after all.
Why not, "The Way, the Truth, the Life?"

—That way
Over the mountain, which who stands upon
Is apt to doubt if it be meant for a road;
While, if he views it from the waste itself,
Up goes the line there, plain from base to brow,
Not vague, mistakeable! what 's a break or two
Seen from the unbroken desert either side?
And then (to bring in fresh philosophy)
What if the breaks themselves should prove at last
The most consummate of contrivances
To train a man's eye, teach him what is faith?
And so we stumble at truth's very test!
All we have gained then by our unbelief
Is a life of doubt diversified by faith,
For one of faith diversified by doubt:
We called the chess-board white,—we call it black.

"Well," you rejoin, "the end 's no worse, at least;
"We 've reason for both colours on the board:
"Why not confess then, where I drop the faith
"And you the doubt, that I 'm as right as you?"

Because, friend, in the next place, this being so,
And both things even,—faith and unbelief
Left to a man's choice,—we 'll proceed a step,
Returning to our image, which I like.

A man's choice, yes—but a cabin-passenger's—
The man made for the special life o' the world—
Do you forget him? I remember though!
Consult our ship's conditions and you find
One and but one choice suitable to all;
The choice, that you unluckily prefer,
Turning things topsy-turvy—they or it
Going to the ground. Belief or unbelief
Bears upon life, determines its whole course,
Begins at its beginning. See the world
Such as it is,—you made it not, nor I;
I mean to take it as it is,—and you,
Not so you 'll take it,—though you get nought else.
I know the special kind of life I like,
What suits the most my idiosyncrasy,
Brings out the best of me and bears me fruit
In power, peace, pleasantness and length of days.
I find that positive belief does this
For me, and unbelief, no whit of this.
—For you, it does, however?—that, we 'll try!
'T is clear, I cannot lead my life, at least,

Induce the world to let me peaceably,
Without declaring at the outset, "Friends,
"I absolutely and peremptorily
"Believe!"—I say, faith is my waking life:
One sleeps, indeed, and dreams at intervals,
We know, but waking 's the main point with us
And my provision 's for life's waking part.
Accordingly, I use heart, head and hand
All day, I build, scheme, study, and make friends;
And when night overtakes me, down I lie,
Sleep, dream a little, and get done with it,
The sooner the better, to begin afresh.
What 's midnight doubt before the dayspring's faith?
You, the philosopher, that disbelieve,
That recognize the night, give dreams their weight—
To be consistent you should keep your bed,
Abstain from healthy acts that prove you man,
For fear you drowse perhaps at unawares!
And certainly at night you 'll sleep and dream,
Live through the day and bustle as you please.
And so you live to sleep as I to wake,
To unbelieve as I to still believe?
Well, and the common sense o' the world calls you
Bed-ridden,—and its good things come to me.
Its estimation, which is half the fight,
That 's the first-cabin comfort I secure:

The next . . . but you perceive with half an eye!
Come, come, it 's best believing, if we may;
You can't but own that!

Next, concede again,
If once we choose belief, on all accounts
We can't be too decisive in our faith,
Conclusive and exclusive in its terms,
To suit the world which gives us the good things.
In every man's career are certain points
Whereon he dares not be indifferent;
The world detects him clearly, if he dare,
As baffled at the game, and losing life.
He may care little or he may care much
For riches, honour, pleasure, work, repose,
Since various theories of life and life's
Success are extant which might easily
Comport with either estimate of these;
And whoso chooses wealth or poverty,
Labour or quiet, is not judged a fool
Because his fellow would choose otherwise:
We let him choose upon his own account
So long as he 's consistent with his choice.
But certain points, left wholly to himself,
When once a man has arbitrated on,
We say he must succeed there or go hang.

Thus, he should wed the woman he loves most
Or needs most, whatsoe'er the love or need—
For he can't wed twice. Then, he must avouch,
Or follow, at the least, sufficiently,
The form of faith his conscience holds the best,
Whate'er the process of conviction was:
For nothing can compensate his mistake
On such a point, the man himself being judge:
He cannot wed twice, nor twice lose his soul.

Well now, there 's one great form of Christian faith
I happened to be born in—which to teach
Was given me as I grew up, on all hands,
As best and readiest means of living by;
The same on examination being proved
The most pronounced moreover, fixed, precise
And absolute form of faith in the whole world—
Accordingly, most potent of all forms
For working on the world. Observe, my friend!
Such as you know me, I am free to say,
In these hard latter days which hamper one,
Myself—by no immoderate exercise
Of intellect and learning, but the tact
To let external forces work for me,
—Bid the street's stones be bread and they are bread;

Bid Peter's creed, or rather, Hildebrand's,
Exalt me o'er my fellows in the world
And make my life an ease and joy and pride;
It does so,—which for me 's a great point gained,
Who have a soul and body that exact
A comfortable care in many ways.
There 's power in me and will to dominate
Which I must exercise, they hurt me else:
In many ways I need mankind's respect,
Obedience, and the love that 's born of fear:
While at the same time, there 's a taste I have,
A toy of soul, a titillating thing,
Refuses to digest these dainties crude.
The naked life is gross till clothed upon:
I must take what men offer, with a grace
As though I would not, could I help it, take!
An uniform I wear though over-rich—
Something imposed on me, no choice of mine;
No fancy-dress worn for pure fancy's sake
And despicable therefore! now folk kneel
And kiss my hand—of course the Church's hand.
Thus I am made, thus life is best for me,
And thus that it should be I have procured;
And thus it could not be another way,
I venture to imagine.

You 'll reply,
So far my choice, no doubt, is a success;
But were I made of better elements,
With nobler instincts, purer tastes, like you,
I hardly would account the thing success
Though it did all for me I say.

But, friend,
We speak of what is; not of what might be,
And how 't were better if 't were otherwise.
I am the man you see here plain enough:
Grant I 'm a beast, why, beasts must lead beasts' lives!
Suppose I own at once to tail and claws;
The tailless man exceeds me: but being tailed
I 'll lash out lion fashion, and leave apes
To dock their stump and dress their haunches up.
My business is not to remake myself,
But make the absolute best of what God made.
Or—our first simile—though you prove me doomed
To a viler berth still, to the steerage-hole,
The sheep-pen or the pig-stye, I should strive
To make what use of each were possible;
And as this cabin gets upholstery,
That hutch should rustle with sufficient straw.

But, friend, I don't acknowledge quite so fast
I fail of all your manhood's lofty tastes

Enumerated so complacently,
On the mere ground that you forsooth can find
In this particular life I choose to lead
No fit provision for them. Can you not?
Say you, my fault is I address myself
To grosser estimators than should judge?
And that 's no way of holding up the soul,
Which, nobler, needs men's praise perhaps, yet knows
One wise man's verdict outweighs all the fools'—
Would like the two, but, forced to choose, takes that.
I pine among my million imbeciles
(You think) aware some dozen men of sense
Eye me and know me, whether I believe
In the last winking Virgin, as I vow,
And am a fool, or disbelieve in her
And am a knave,—approve in neither case,
Withhold their voices though I look their way:
Like Verdi when, at his worst opera's end
(The thing they gave at Florence,—what 's its name?)
While the mad houseful's plaudits near out-bang
His orchestra of salt-box, tongs and bones,
He looks through all the roaring and the wreaths
Where sits Rossini patient in his stall.

Nay, friend, I meet you with an answer here—
That even your prime men who appraise their kind

Are men still, catch a wheel within a wheel,
See more in a truth than the truth's simple self,
Confuse themselves. You see lads walk the street
Sixty the minute; what 's to note in that?
You see one lad o'erstride a chimney-stack;
Him you must watch—he 's sure to fall, yet stands!
Our interest 's on the dangerous edge of things.
The honest thief, the tender murderer,
The superstitious atheist, demirep
That loves and saves her soul in new French books—
We watch while these in equilibrium keep
The giddy line midway: one step aside,
They 're classed and done with. I, then, keep the line
Before your sages,—just the men to shrink
From the gross weights, coarse scales and labels broad
You offer their refinement. Fool or knave?
Why needs a bishop be a fool or knave
When there 's a thousand diamond weights between?
So, I enlist them. Your picked twelve, you 'll find,
Profess themselves indignant, scandalized
At thus being held unable to explain
How a superior man who disbelieves
May not believe as well: that 's Schelling's way!
It 's through my coming in the tail of time,
Nicking the minute with a happy tact.
Had I been born three hundred years ago

They 'd say, "What 's strange? Blougram of course
believes;"
And, seventy years since, "disbelieves of course."
But now, "He may believe; and yet, and yet
"How can he?" All eyes turn with interest.
Whereas, step off the line on either side—
You, for example, clever to a fault,
The rough and ready man who write apace,
Read somewhat seldomer, think perhaps even less—
You disbelieve! Who wonders and who cares?
Lord So-and-so—his coat bedropped with wax,
All Peter's chains about his waist, his back
Brave with the needlework of Noodledom—
Believes! Again, who wonders and who cares?
But I, the man of sense and learning too,
The able to think yet act, the this, the that,
I, to believe at this late time of day!
Enough; you see, I need not fear contempt.

—Except it 's yours! Admire me as these may,
You don't. But whom at least do you admire?
Present your own perfection, your ideal,
Your pattern man for a minute—oh, make haste,
Is it Napoleon you would have us grow?
Concede the means; allow his head and hand,
(A large concession, clever as you are)

Good! In our common primal element
Of unbelief (we can't believe, you know—
We're still at that admission, recollect!)
Where do you find—apart from, towering o'er
The secondary temporary aims
Which satisfy the gross taste you despise—
Where do you find his star?—his crazy trust
God knows through what or in what? it's alive
And shines and leads him, and that's all we want.
Have we aught in our sober night shall point
Such ends as his were, and direct the means
Of working out our purpose straight as his,
Nor bring a moment's trouble on success
With after-care to justify the same?
—Be a Napoleon, and yet disbelieve—
Why, the man's mad, friend, take his light away!
What's the vague good o' the world, for which you dare
With comfort to yourself blow millions up?
We neither of us see it! we do see
The blown-up millions—spatter of their brains
And writhing of their bowels and so forth
In that bewildering entanglement
Of horrible eventualities
Past calculation to the end of time!
Can I mistake for some clear word of God
(Which were my ample warrant for it all)

His puff of hazy instinct, idle talk,
"The State, that 's I," quack-nonsense about crowns,
And (when one beats the man to his last hold)
A vague idea of setting things to rights,
Policing people efficaciously,
More to their profit, most of all to his own;
The whole to end that dismallest of ends
By an Austrian marriage, cant to us the Church,
And resurrection of the old *régime*?
Would I, who hope to live a dozen years,
Fight Austerlitz for reasons such and such?
No: for, concede me but the merest chance
Doubt may be wrong—there 's judgment, life to come!
With just that chance, I dare not. Doubt proves right?
This present life is all?—you offer me
Its dozen noisy years, without a chance
That wedding an archduchess, wearing lace,
And getting called by divers new-coined names,
Will drive off ugly thoughts and let me dine,
Sleep, read and chat in quiet as I like!
Therefore I will not.

Take another case;
Fit up the cabin yet another way.
What say you to the poets? shall we write
Hamlet, Othello—make the world our own,

Without a risk to run of either sort?
I can't!—to put the strongest reason first.
"But try," you urge, "the trying shall suffice;
"The aim, if reached or not, makes great the life:
"Try to be Shakespeare, leave the rest to fate!"
Spare my self-knowledge—there 's no fooling me!
If I prefer remaining my poor self,
I say so not in self-dispraise but praise.
If I 'm a Shakespeare, let the well alone;
Why should I try to be what now I am?
If I 'm no Shakespeare, as too probable,—
His power and consciousness and self-delight
And all we want in common, shall I find—
Trying for ever? while on points of taste
Wherewith, to speak it humbly, he and I
Are dowered alike—I 'll ask you, I or he,
Which in our two lives realizes most?
Much, he imagined—somewhat, I possess.
He had the imagination; stick to that!
Let him say, "In the face of my soul's works
"Your world is worthless and I touch it not
"Lest I should wrong them"—I 'll withdraw my plea.
But does he say so? look upon his life!
Himself, who only can, gives judgment there.
He leaves his towers and gorgeous palaces
To build the trimmest house in Stratford town;

Saves money, spends it, owns the worth of things,
Giulio Romano's pictures, Dowland's lute;
Enjoys a show, respects the puppets, too,
And none more, had he seen its entry once,
Than "Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal."
Why then should I who play that personage,
The very Pandulph Shakespeare's fancy made,
Be told that had the poet chanced to start
From where I stand now (some degree like mine
Being just the goal he ran his race to reach)
He would have run the whole race back, forsooth,
And left being Pandulph, to begin write plays?
Ah, the earth's best can be but the earth's best!
Did Shakespeare live, he could but sit at home
And get himself in dreams the Vatican,
Greek busts, Venetian paintings, Roman walls,
And English books, none equal to his own,
Which I read, bound in gold (he never did).
—Terni's fall, Naples' bay and Gothard's top—
Eh, friend? I could not fancy one of these;
But, as I pour this claret, there they are:
I 've gained them—crossed St. Gothard last July
With ten mules to the carriage and a bed
Slung inside; is my hap the worse for that?
We want the same things, Shakespeare and myself,
And what I want, I have: he, gifted more,

Could fancy he too had them when he liked,
But not so thoroughly that, if fate allowed,
He would not have them also in my sense.
We play one game; I send the ball aloft
No less adroitly that of fifty strokes
Scarce five go o'er the wall so wide and high
Which sends them back to me: I wish and get.
He struck balls higher and with better skill,
But at a poor fence level with his head,
And hit—his Stratford house, a coat of arms,
Successful dealings in his grain and wool,—
While I receive heaven's incense in my nose
And style myself the cousin of Queen Bess.
Ask him, if this life 's all, who wins the game?

Believe—and our whole argument breaks up.
Enthusiasm 's the best thing, I repeat;
Only, we can't command it; fire and life
Are all, dead matter 's nothing, we agree:
And be it a mad dream or God's very breath,
The fact 's the same, belief's fire, once in us,
Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself:
We penetrate our life with such a glow
As fire lends wood and iron—this turns steel,
That burns to ash—all 's one, fire proves its power
For good or ill, since men call flare success.

But paint a fire, it will not therefore burn.
Light one in me, I 'll find it food enough!
Why, to be Luther—that 's a life to lead,
Incomparably better than my own.
He comes, reclaims God's earth for God, he says,
Sets up God's rule again by simple means,
Re-opens a shut book, and all is done.
He flared out in the flaring of mankind;
Such Luther's luck was: how shall such be mine?
If he succeeded, nothing 's left to do:
And if he did not altogether—well,
Strauss is the next advance. All Strauss should be
I might be also. But to what result?
He looks upon no future: Luther did.
What can I gain on the denying side?
Ice makes no conflagration. State the facts,
Read the text right, emancipate the world—
The emancipated world enjoys itself
With scarce a thank-you: Blougram told it first
It could not owe a farthing,—not to him
More than Saint Paul! 't would press its pay, you think?
Then add there 's still that plaguy hundredth chance
Strauss may be wrong. And so a risk is run—
For what gain? not for Luther's, who secured
A real heaven in his heart throughout his life,
Supposing death a little altered things.

" Ay, but since really you lack faith," you cry,
" You run the same risk really on all sides,
" In cool indifference as bold unbelief.
" As well be Strauss as swing 'twixt Paul and him.
" It 's not worth having, such imperfect faith,
" No more available to do faith's work
" Than unbelief like mine. Whole faith, or none!"

Softly, my friend! I must dispute that point.
Once own the use of faith, I 'll find you faith.
We 're back on Christian ground. You call for faith:
I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists.
The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I say,
If faith o'ercomes doubt. How I know it does?
By life and man's free will, God gave for that!
To mould life as we choose it, shows our choice:
That 's our one act, the previous work 's his own.
You criticize the soul? it reared this tree—
This broad life and whatever fruit it bears!
What matter though I doubt at every pore,
Head-doubts, heart-doubts, doubts at my fingers' ends,
Doubts in the trivial work of every day,
Doubts at the very bases of my soul
In the grand moments when she probes herself—
If finally I have a life to show,
The thing I did, brought out in evidence

Against the thing done to me underground
By hell and all its brood, for aught I know?
I say, whence sprang this? shows it faith or doubt?
All 's doubt in me ; where 's break of faith in this?
It is the idea, the feeling and the love,
God means mankind should strive for and show forth
Whatever be the process to that end,—
And not historic knowledge, logic sound,
And metaphysical acumen, sure!
" What think ye of Christ," friend? when all 's done
and said,
Like you this Christianity or not?
It may be false, but will you wish it true?
Has it your vote to be so if it can?
Trust you an instinct silenced long ago
That will break silence and enjoin you love
What mortified philosophy is hoarse,
And all in vain, with bidding you despise?
If you desire faith—then you 've faith enough:
What else seeks God—nay, what else seek ourselves?
You form a notion of me, we 'll suppose,
On hearsay ; it 's a favourable one :
" But still " (you add), " there was no such good man,
" Because of contradiction in the facts.
" One proves, for instance, he was born in Rome,
" This Blougram ; yet throughout the tales of him

" I see he figures as an Englishman."
Well, the two things are reconcileable.
But would I rather you discovered that,
Subjoining—" Still, what matter though they be?
" Blougram concerns me nought, born here or there."

Pure faith indeed—you know not what you ask!
Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,
Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too much
The sense of conscious creatures to be borne.
It were the seeing him, no flesh shall dare.
Some think, Creation 's meant to show him forth:
I say it 's meant to hide him all it can,
And that 's what all the blessed evil 's for.
Its use in Time is to environ us,
Our breath, our drop of dew, with shield enough
Against that sight till we can bear its stress.
Under a vertical sun, the exposed brain
And lidless eye and disemprisoned heart
Less certainly would wither up at once
Than mind, confronted with the truth of him.
But time and earth case-harden us to live;
The feeblest sense is trusted most; the child
Feels God a moment, ichors o'er the place,
Plays on and grows to be a man like us.

With me, faith means perpetual unbelief
Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Michael's foot
Who stands calm just because he feels it writhe.
Or, if that 's too ambitious,—here 's my box—
I need the excitation of a pinch
Threatening the torpor of the inside-nose
Nigh on the imminent sneeze that never comes.
" Leave it in peace " advise the simple folk:
Make it aware of peace by itching-fits,
Say I—let doubt occasion still more faith!

You 'll say, once all believed, man, woman, child,
In that dear middle-age these noodles praise.
How you 'd exult if I could put you back
Six hundred years, blot out cosmogony,
Geology, ethnology, what not,
(Greek endings, each the little passing-bell
That signifies some faith 's about to die),
And set you square with Genesis again,—
When such a traveller told you his last news,
He saw the ark a-top of Ararat
But did not climb there since 't was getting dusk
And robber-bands infest the mountain's foot!
How should you feel, I ask, in such an age,
How act? As other people felt and did;
With soul more blank than this decanter's knob,

Believe—and yet lie, kill, rob, fornicate
Full in belief's face, like the beast you 'd be !

No, when the fight begins within himself,
A man 's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet—both tug—
He 's left, himself, i' the middle : the soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through his life !
Never leave growing till the life to come !
Here, we 've got callous to the Virgin's winks
That used to puzzle people wholesomely :
Men have outgrown the shame of being fools.
What are the laws of nature, not to bend
If the Church bid them?—brother Newman asks.
Up with the Immaculate Conception, then—
On to the rack with faith !—is my advice.
Will not that hurry us upon our knees,
Knocking our breasts, " It can't be—yet it shall !
" Who am I, the worm, to argue with my Pope?
" Low things confound the high things !" and so forth.
That 's better than acquitting God with grace
As some folk do. He 's tried—no case is proved,
Philosophy is lenient—he may go !

You 'll say, the old system 's not so obsolete
But men believe still : ay, but who and where?

King Bomba's lazzaroni foster yet
The sacred flame, so Antonelli writes;
But even of these, what ragamuffin-saint
Believes God watches him continually,
As he believes in fire that it will burn,
Or rain that it will drench him? Break fire's law,
Sin against rain, although the penalty
Be just a singe or soaking? "No," he smiles;
"Those laws are laws that can enforce themselves."

The sum of all is—yes, my doubt is great,
My faith 's still greater, then my faith 's enough.
I have read much, thought much, experienced much,
Yet would die rather than avow my fear
The Naples' liquefaction may be false,
When set to happen by the palace-clock
According to the clouds or dinner-time.
I hear you recommend, I might at least
Eliminate, decrassify my faith
Since I adopt it; keeping what I must
And leaving what I can—such points as this.
I won't—that is, I can't throw one away.
Supposing there 's no truth in what I hold
About the need of trial to man's faith,
Still, when you bid me purify the same,
To such a process I discern no end.

Clearing off one excrescence to see two,
There 's ever a next in size, now grown as big,
That meets the knife: I cut and cut again!
First cut the Liquefaction, what comes last
But Fichte's clever cut at God himself?
Experimentalize on sacred things!
I trust nor hand nor eye nor heart nor brain
To stop betimes: they all get drunk alike.
The first step, I am master not to take.

You 'd find the cutting-process to your taste
As much as leaving growths of lies unpruned,
Nor see more danger in it,—you retort.
Your taste 's worth mine; but my taste proves more wise
When we consider that the steadfast hold
On the extreme end of the chain of faith
Gives all the advantage, makes the difference
With the rough purblind mass we seek to rule:
We are their lords, or they are free of us,
Just as we tighten or relax our hold.
So, others matters equal, we 'll revert
To the first problem—which, if solved my way
And thrown into the balance, turns the scale—
How we may lead a comfortable life,
How suit our luggage to the cabin's size.

Of course you are remarking all this time
How narrowly and grossly I view life,
Respect the creature-comforts, care to rule
The masses, and regard complacently
"The cabin," in our old phrase. Well, I do.
I act for, talk for, live for this world now,
As this world prizes action, life and talk:
No prejudice to what next world may prove,
Whose new laws and requirements, my best pledge
To observe then, is that I observe these now,
Shall do hereafter what I do meanwhile.
Let us concede (gratuitously though)
Next life relieves the soul of body, yields
Pure spiritual enjoyment: well, my friend,
Why lose this life i' the meantime, since its use
May be to make the next life more intense?

Do you know, I have often had a dream
(Work it up in your next month's article)
Of man's poor spirit in its progress, still
Losing true life for ever and a day
Through ever trying to be and ever being—
In the evolution of successive spheres—
Before its actual sphere and place of life,
Halfway into the next, which having reached,
It shoots with corresponding foolery

Halfway into the next still, on and off!
As when a traveller, bound from North to South,
Scouts fur in Russia: what 's its use in France?
In France spurns flannel: where 's its need in Spain?
In Spain drops cloth, too cumbrous for Algiers!
Linen goes next, and last the skin itself,
A superfluity at Timbuctoo.
When, through his journey, was the fool at ease?
I 'm at ease now, friend; worldly in this world,
I take and like its way of life; I think
My brothers, who administer the means,
Live better for my comfort—that 's good too;
And God, if he pronounce upon such life,
Approves my service, which is better still.
If he keep silence,—why, for you or me
Or that brute beast pulled-up in to-day's "Times,"
What odds is 't, save to ourselves, what life we lead?

You meet me at this issue: you declare,—
All special-pleading done with—truth is truth,
And justifies itself by undreamed ways.
You don't fear but it 's better, if we doubt,
To say so, act up to our truth perceived
However feebly. Do then,—act away!
'T is there I 'm on the watch for you. How one acts
Is, both of us agree, our chief concern:

And how you 'll act is what I fain would see
If, like the candid person you appear,
You dare to make the most of your life's scheme
As I of mine, live up to its full law
Since there 's no higher law that counterchecks.
Put natural religion to the test
You 've just demolished the revealed with—quick,
Down to the root of all that checks your will,
All prohibition to lie, kill and thieve,
Or even to be an atheistic priest!
Suppose a pricking to incontinence—
Philosophers deduce you chastity
Or shame, from just the fact that at the first
Whoso embraced a woman in the field,
Threw club down and forewent his brains beside,
So, stood a ready victim in the reach
Of any brother savage, club in hand;
Hence saw the use of going out of sight
In wood or cave to prosecute his loves:
I read this in a French book t' other day.
Does law so analysed coerce you much?
Oh, men spin clouds of fuzz where matters end,
But you who reach where the first thread begins,
You 'll soon cut that!—which means you can, but won't,
Through certain instincts, blind, unreasoned-out,

You dare not set aside, you can't tell why,
But there they are, and so you let them rule.
Then, friend, you seem as much a slave as I,
A liar, conscious coward and hypocrite,
Without the good the slave expects to get,
In case he has a master after all!
You own your instincts? why, what else do I,
Who want, am made for, and must have a God
Ere I can be aught, do aught?—no mere name
Want, but the true thing with what proves its truth,
To wit, a relation from that thing to me,
Touching from head to foot—which touch I feel,
And with it take the rest, this life of ours!
I live my life here; yours you dare not live.

—Not as I state it, who (you please subjoin)
Disfigure such a life and call it names,
While, to your mind, remains another way
For simple men: knowledge and power have rights,
But ignorance and weakness have rights too.
There needs no crucial effort to find truth
If here or there or anywhere about:
We ought to turn each side, try hard and see,
And if we can't, be glad we 've earned at least
The right, by one laborious proof the more,
To graze in peace earth's pleasant pasturage.

Men are not angels, neither are they brutes:
Something we may see, all we cannot see.
What need of lying? I say, I see all,
And swear to each detail the most minute
In what I think a Pan's face—you, mere cloud:
I swear I hear him speak and see him wink,
For fear, if once I drop the emphasis,
Mankind may doubt there 's any cloud at all.
You take the simple life—ready to see,
Willing to see (for no cloud 's worth a face)—
And leaving quiet what no strength can move,
And which, who bids you move? who has the right?
I bid you; but you are God's sheep, not mine:
"*Pastor est tui Dominus.*" You find
In this the pleasant pasture of our life
Much you may eat without the least offence,
Much you don't eat because your maw objects,
Much you would eat but that your fellow-flock
Open great eyes at you and even butt,
And thereupon you like your mates so well
You cannot please yourself, offending them;
Though when they seem exorbitantly sheep,
You weigh your pleasure with their butts and bleats
And strike the balance. Sometimes certain fears
Restrain you, real checks since you find them so;
Sometimes you please yourself and nothing checks:

And thus you graze through life with not one lie,
And like it best.

But do you, in truth's name?
If so, you beat—which means you are not I—
Who needs must make earth mine and feed my fill
Not simply unbutted at, unbickered with,
But motioned to the velvet of the sward
By those obsequious wethers' very selves.
Look at me, sir; my age is double yours:
At yours, I knew beforehand, so enjoyed,
What now I should be—as, permit the word,
I pretty well imagine your whole range
And stretch of tether twenty years to come.
We both have minds and bodies much alike:
In truth's name, don't you want my bishopric,
My daily bread, my influence and my state?
You 're young. I 'm old; you must be old one day;
Will you find then, as I do hour by hour,
Women their lovers kneel to, who cut curls
From your fat lap-dog's ear to grace a brooch—
Dukes, who petition just to kiss your ring—
With much beside you know or may conceive?
Suppose we die to-night: well, here am I,
Such were my gains, life bore this fruit to me,
While writing all the same my articles

On music, poetry, the fictile vase
Found at Albano, chess, Anacreon's Greek.
But you—the highest honour in your life,
The thing you 'll crown yourself with, all your days,
Is—dining here and drinking this last glass
I pour you out in sign of amity
Before we part for ever. Of your power
And social influence, worldly worth in short,
Judge what 's my estimation by the fact,
I do not condescend to enjoin, beseech,
Hint secrecy on one of all these words!
You 're shrewd and know that should you publish one
The world would brand the lie—my enemies first,
Who 'd sneer—"the bishop 's an arch-hypocrite
"And knave perhaps, but not so frank a fool."
Whereas I should not dare for both my ears
Breathe one such syllable, smile one such smile,
Before the chaplain who reflects myself—
My shade 's so much more potent than your flesh.
What 's your reward, self-abnegating friend?
Stood you confessed of those exceptional
And privileged great natures that dwarf mine—
A zealot with a mad ideal in reach,
A poet just about to print his ode,
A statesman with a scheme to stop this war,
An artist whose religion is his art—

I should have nothing to object: such men
Carry the fire, all things grow warm to them,
Their drugget 's worth my purple, they beat me.
But you,—you 're just as little those as I—
You, Gigadibs, who, thirty years of age,
Write statedly for Blackwood's Magazine,
Believe you see two points in Hamlet's soul
Unseized by the Germans yet—which view you 'll print—
Meantime the best you have to show being still
That lively lightsome article we took
Almost for the true Dickens,—what 's its name?
"The Slum and Cellar, or Whitechapel life
"Limned after dark!" it made me laugh, I know,
And pleased a month, and brought you in ten pounds.
—Success I recognize and compliment,
And therefore give you, if you choose, three words
(The card and pencil-scratch is quite enough)
Which whether here, in Dublin or New York,
Will get you, prompt as at my eyebrow's wink,
Such terms as never you aspired to get
In all our own reviews and some not ours.
Go write your lively sketches! be the first
"Blougram, or The Eccentric Confidence"—
Or better simply say, "The Outward-bound."
Why, men as soon would throw it in my teeth
As copy and quote the infamy chalked broad
About me on the church-door opposite.

You will not wait for that experience though,
I fancy, howsoever you decide,
To discontinue—not detesting, not
Defaming, but at least—despising me!

Over his wine so smiled and talked his hour
Sylvester Blougram, styled *in partibus*
Episcopus, nec non—(the deuce knows what
It 's changed to by our novel hierarchy)
With Gigadibs the literary man,
Who played with spoons, explored his plate's design,
And ranged the olive-stones about its edge,
While the great bishop rolled him out a mind
Long crumpled, till creased consciousness lay smooth.

For Blougram, he believed, say, half he spoke.
The other portion, as he shaped it thus
For argumentatory purposes,
He felt his foe was foolish to dispute.
Some arbitrary accidental thoughts
That crossed his mind, amusing because new,
He chose to represent as fixtures there,
Invariable convictions (such they seemed
Beside his interlocutor's loose cards
Flung daily down, and not the same way twice)

While certain hell deep instincts, man's weak tongue
Is never bold to utter in their truth
Because styled hell-deep ('t is an old mistake
To place hell at the bottom of the earth)
He ignored these,—not having in readiness
Their nomenclature and philosophy:
He said true things, but called them by wrong names.
"On the whole," he thought, "I justify myself
"On every point where cavillers like this
"Oppugn my life: he tries one kind of fence,
"I close, he 's worsted, that 's enough for him.
"He 's on the ground: if ground should break away
"I take my stand on, there 's a firmer yet
"Beneath it, both of us may sink and reach.
"His ground was over mine and broke the first:
"So, let him sit with me this many a year!"

He did not sit five minutes. Just a week
Sufficed his sudden healthy vehemence.
Something had struck him in the "Outward-bound"
Another way than Blougram's purpose was:
And having bought, not cabin-furniture
But settler's-implements (enough for three)
And started for Australia—there, I hope,
By this time he has tested his first plough,
And studied his last chapter of St. John.

CLEON.

"As certain also of your own poets have said"—

Cleon the poet (from the sprinkled isles,
Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,
And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps
"Greece")—
To Protus in his Tyranny: much health!

They give thy letter to me, even now:
I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.
The master of thy galley still unlades
Gift after gift; they block my court at last
And pile themselves along its portico
Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee:
And one white she-slave from the group dispersed
Of black and white slaves (like the chequer-work
Pavement, at once my nation's work and gift,
Now covered with this settle-down of doves),
One lyric woman, in her crocus vest

Woven of sea-wools, with her two white hands
Commends to me the strainer and the cup
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence!
For so shall men remark, in such an act
Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,
Thy recognition of the use of life;
Nor call thy spirit barely adequate
To help on life in straight ways, broad enough
For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.
Thou, in the daily building of thy tower,—
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of toil,
Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,
Or when the general work 'mid good acclaim
Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect,—
Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's sake—
Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope
Of some eventual rest a-top of it,
Whence, all the tumult of the building hushed,
Thou first of men mightst look out to the East:
The vulgar saw thy tower, thou sawest the sun.
For this, I promise on thy festival
To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,
Making this slave narrate thy fortunes, speak
Thy great words, and describe thy royal face—

Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the most,
Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me here.
It is as thou hast heard: in one short life
I, Cleon, have effected all those things
Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.
That epos on thy hundred plates of gold
Is mine,—and also mine the little chant,
So sure to rise from every fishing-bark
When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their net.
The image of the sun-god on the phare,
Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine;
The Pœcile, o'er-storied its whole length,
As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine too.
I know the true proportions of a man
And woman also, not observed before;
And I have written three books on the soul,
Proving absurd all written hitherto,
And putting us to ignorance again.
For music,—why, I have combined the moods,
Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine;
Thus much the people know and recognize,
Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel not.
We of these latter days, with greater mind
Than our forerunners, since more composite,

Look not so great, beside their simple way,
To a judge who only sees one way at once,
One mind-point and no other at a time,—
Compares the small part of a man of us
With some whole man of the heroic age,
Great in his way—not ours, nor meant for ours.
And ours is greater, had we skill to know:
For, what we call this life of men on earth,
This sequence of the soul's achievements here
Being, as I find much reason to conceive,
Intended to be viewed eventually
As a great whole, not analyzed to parts,
But each part having reference to all,—
How shall a certain part, pronounced complete,
Endure effacement by another part?
Was the thing done?—then, what 's to do again?
See, in the chequered pavement opposite,
Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,
And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid—
He did not overlay them, superimpose
The new upon the old and blot it out,
But laid them on a level in his work,
Making at last a picture; there it lies.
So, first the perfect separate forms were made,
The portions of mankind; and after, so,
Occurred the combination of the same.

For where had been a progress, otherwise?
Mankind, made up of all the single men,—
In such a synthesis the labour ends.
Now mark me! those divine men of old time
Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one point
The outside verge that rounds our faculty;
And where they reached, who can do more than reach?
It takes but little water just to touch
At some one point the inside of a sphere,
And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the rest
In due succession: but the finer air
Which not so palpably nor obviously,
Though no less universally, can touch
The whole circumference of that emptied sphere,
Fills it more fully than the water did;
Holds thrice the weight of water in itself
Resolved into a subtler element.
And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full
Up to the visible height—and after, void;
Not knowing air's more hidden properties.
And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to Zeus
To vindicate his purpose in our life:
Why stay we on the earth unless to grow?
Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out,
That he or other god descended here
And, once for all, showed simultaneously

What, in its nature, never can be shown,
Piecemeal or in succession;—showed, I say,
The worth both absolute and relative
Of all his children from the birth of time,
His instruments for all appointed work.
I now go on to image,—might we hear
The judgment which should give the due to each,
Show where the labour lay and where the ease,
And prove Zeus' self, the latent everywhere!
This is a dream:—but no dream, let us hope,
That years and days, the summers and the springs,
Follow each other with unwaning powers.
The grapes which dye thy wine are richer far,
Through culture, than the wild wealth of the rock;
The suave plum than the savage-tasted drupe;
The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet;
The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn flowers;
That young and tender crescent-moon, thy slave,
Sleeping above her robe as buoyed by clouds,
Refines upon the women of my youth.
What, and the soul alone deteriorates?
I have not chanted verse like Homer, no—
Nor swept string like Terpander, no—nor carved
And painted men like Phidias and his friend:
I am not great as they are, point by point.
But I have entered into sympathy

With these four, running these into one soul,
Who, separate, ignored eachother's art.
Say, is it nothing that I know them all?
The wild flower was the larger; I have dashed
Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's
Honey with wine, and driven its seed to fruit,
And show a better flower if not so large:
I stand myself. Refer this to the gods
Whose gift alone it is! which, shall I dare
(All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext
That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,
Discourse of lightly or depreciate?
It might have fallen to another's hand: what then?
I pass too surely: let at least truth stay!

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.
This being with me as I declare, O king,
My works, in all these varicoloured kinds,
So done by me, accepted so by men—
Thou askest, if (my soul thus in men's hearts)
I must not be accounted to attain
The very crown and proper end of life?
Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,
I face death with success in my right hand:
Whether I fear death less than dost thyself
The fortunate of men? "For" (writest thou)

"Thou leavest much behind, while I leave nought.
"Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,
"The pictures men shall study; while my life,
"Complete and whole now in its power and joy,
"Dies altogether with my brain and arm,
"Is lost indeed; since, what survives myself?
"The brazen statue to o'erlook my grave,
"Set on the promontory which I named.
"And that—some supple courtier of my heir
"Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,
"To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.
"I go then: triumph thou, who dost not go!"

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind.
Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse
Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,
That admiration grows as knowledge grows?
That imperfection means perfection hid,
Reserved in part, to grace the after-time?
If, in the morning of philosophy,
Ere aught had been recorded, nay perceived,
Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked
On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,
Ere man, her last, appeared upon the stage—
Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and deduced
The perfectness of others yet unseen.

Conceding which,—had Zeus then questioned thee
"Shall I go on a step, improve on this,
"Do more for visible creatures than is done?"
Thou wouldst have answered, "Ay, by making each
"Grow conscious in himself—by that alone.
"All 's perfect else: the shell sucks fast the rock,
"The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims
"And slides, forth range the beasts, the birds take flight,
"Till life's mechanics can no further go—
"And all this joy in natural life is put
"Like fire from off thy finger into each,
"So exquisitely perfect is the same.
"But 't is pure fire, and they mere matter are;
"It has them, not they it: and so I choose
"For man, thy last premeditated work
"(If I might add a glory to the scheme)
"That a third thing should stand apart from both,
"A quality arise within his soul,
"Which, intro-active, made to supervise
"And feel the force it has, may view itself,
"And so be happy." Man might live at first
The animal life: but is there nothing more?
In due time, let him critically learn
How he lives; and, the more he gets to know
Of his own life's adaptabilities,

The more joy-giving will his life become.
Thus man, who hath this quality, is best.

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said:
" Let progress end at once,—man make no step
" Beyond the natural man, the better beast,
" Using his senses, not the sense of sense."
In man there 's failure, only since he left
The lower and inconscious forms of life.
We called it an advance, the rendering plain
Man's spirit might grow conscious of man's life,
And, by new lore so added to the old,
Take each step higher over the brute's head.
This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,
Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,
Which whole surrounding flats of natural life
Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to;
A tower that crowns a country. But alas,
The soul now climbs it just to perish there!
For thence we have discovered ('t is no dream—
We know this, which we had not else perceived)
That there 's a world of capability
For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,
Inviting us; and still the soul craves all,
And still the flesh replies, " Take no jot more
" Than ere thou clombst the tower to look abroad!

" Nay, so much less as that fatigue has brought
" Deduction to it." We struggle, fain to enlarge
Our bounded physical recipiency,
Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,
Repair the waste of age and sickness: no,
It skills not! life 's inadequate to joy,
As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.
They praise a fountain in my garden here
Wherein a Naiad sends the water-bow
Thin from her tube; she smiles to see it rise.
What if I told her, it is just a thread
From that great river which the hills shut up,
And mock her with my leave to take the same?
The artificer has given her one small tube
Past power to widen or exchange—what boots
To know she might spout oceans if she could?
She cannot lift beyond her first thin thread:
And so a man can use but a man's joy
While he sees God's. Is it for Zeus to boast,
" See, man, how happy I live, and despair—
" That I may be still happier—for thy use!"
If this were so, we could not thank our lord,
As hearts beat on to doing; 't is not so—
Malice it is not. Is it carelessness?
Still, no. If care—where is the sign? I ask,
And get no answer, and agree in sum,

O king, with thy profound discouragement.
Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.
Most progress is most failure: thou sayest well.

The last point now:—thou dost except a case—
Holding joy not impossible to one
With artist-gifts—to such a man as I
Who leave behind me living works indeed;
For, such a poem, such a painting lives.
What? dost thou verily trip upon a word,
Confound the accurate view of what joy is
(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)
With feeling joy? confound the knowing how
And showing how to live (my faculty)
With actually living?—Otherwise
Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?
Because in my great epos I display
How divers men young, strong, fair, wise, can act—
Is this as though I acted? if I paint,
Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore young?
Methinks I 'm older that I bowed myself
The many years of pain that taught me art!
Indeed, to know is something, and to prove
How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more:
But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something too.
Yon rower, with the moulded muscles there,

Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.
I can write love-odes: thy fair slave 's an ode.
I get to sing of love, when grown too grey
For being beloved: she turns to that young man,
The muscles all a-ripple on his back.
I know the joy of kingship: well, thou art king!

" But," sayest thou—(and I marvel, I repeat
To find thee trip on such a mere word) " what
" Thou writest, paintest, stays; that does not die:
" Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,
" And Æschylus, because we read his plays!"
Why, if they live still, let them come and take
Thy slave in my despite, drink from thy cup,
Speak in my place. Thou diest while I survive?
Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,
In this, that every day my sense of joy
Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
By power and insight) more enlarged, more keen;
While every day my hairs fall more and more,
My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase—
The horror quickening still from year to year,
The consummation coming past escape
When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy—
When all my works wherein I prove my worth,
Being present still to mock me in men's mouths,

Alive still, in the praise of such as thou,
I, I the feeling, thinking, acting man,
The man who loved his life so over-much,
Sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,
I dare at times imagine to my need
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
Unlimited in capability
For joy, as this is in desire for joy,
—To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us:
That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait
On purpose to make prized the life at large—
Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death,
We burst there as the worm into the fly,
Who, while a worm still, wants his wings. But no!
Zeus has not yet revealed it; and alas,
He must have done so, were it possible!

Live long and happy, and in that thought die:
Glad for what was! Farewell. And for the rest,
I cannot tell thy messenger aright
Where to deliver what he bears of thine
To one called Paulus; we have heard his fame
Indeed, if Christus be not one with him—
I know not, nor am troubled much to know.
Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew
As Paulus proves to be, one circumcized,

Hath access to a secret shut from us?
Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,
In stooping to inquire of such an one,
As if his answer could impose at all!
He writeth, doth he? well, and he may write.
Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves
Who touched on this same isle, preached him and
Christ;
And (as I gathered from a bystander)
Their doctrine could be held by no sane man.

RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI.

I.

I KNOW a Mount, the gracious Sun perceives
First, when he visits, last, too, when he leaves
The world; and, vainly favoured, it repays
The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze
By no change of its large calm front of snow.
And underneath the Mount, a Flower I know,
He cannot have perceived, that changes ever
At his approach; and, in the lost endeavour
To live his life, has parted, one by one,
With all a flower's true graces, for the grace
Of being but a foolish mimic sun,
With ray-like florets round a disk like face.
Men nobly call by many a name the Mount
As over many a land of theirs its large
Calm front of snow like a triumphal targe
Is reared, and still with old names, fresh names vie,
Each to its proper praise and own account:
Men call the Flower the Sunflower, sportively.

II.

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look
Across the waters to this twilight nook,
—The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook!

III.

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East indeed?
Go!—saying ever as thou dost proceed,
That I, French Rudel, choose for my device
A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice
Before its idol. See! These inexpert
And hurried fingers could not fail to hurt
The woven picture; 't is a woman's skill
Indeed; but nothing baffled me, so, ill
Or well, the work is finished. Say, men feed
On songs I sing, and therefore bask the bees
On my flower's breast as on a platform broad:
But, as the flower's concern is not for these
But solely for the sun, so men applaud
In vain this Rudel, he not looking here
But to the East—the East! Go, say this, Pilgrim dear!

ONE WORD MORE *

TO E. B. B.

1855.

I.

THERE they are, my fifty men and women
Naming me the fifty poems finished!
Take them, Love, the book and me together:
Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

II.

Rafael made a century of sonnets,
Made and wrote them in a certain volume
Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil
Else he only used to draw Madonnas:
These, the world might view—but one, the volume.
Who that one, you ask? Your heart instructs you.

* Originally appended to the collection of Poems called "Men and Women," the greater portion of which has now been, more correctly, distributed under the other titles of this edition.

Did she live and love it all her life-time?
Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,
Die, and let it drop beside her pillow
Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,
Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving—
Cheek, the world was wont to hail a painter's
Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's?

III.

You and I would rather read that volume,
(Taken to his beating bosom by it)
Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,
Would we not? than wonder at Madonnas—
Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,
Her, that visits Florence in a vision,
Her, that 's left with lilies in the Louvre—
Seen by us and all the world in circle.

IV.

You and I will never read that volume.
Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple
Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it.
Guido Reni dying, all Bologna
Cried, and the world cried too, "Ours, the treasure!"
Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

v.

Dante once prepared to paint an angel:
Whom to please? You whisper "Beatrice."
While he mused and traced it and retraced it,
(Peradventure with a pen corroded
Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,
When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked,
Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,
Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,
Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle,
Let the wretch go festering through Florence)—
Dante, who loved well because he hated,
Hated wickedness that hinders loving,
Dante standing, studying his angel,—
In there broke the folk of his Inferno.
Says he—"Certain people of importance"
(Such he gave his daily dreadful line to)
"Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet."
Says the poet—"Then I stopped my painting."

VI.

You and I would rather see that angel,
Painted by the tenderness of Dante,
Would we not?—than read a fresh Inferno.

VII.

You and I will never see that picture.
While he mused on love and Beatrice,
While he softened o'er his outlined angel,
In they broke, those "people of importance:"
We and Bice bear the loss for ever.

VIII.

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?
This: no artist lives and loves, that longs not
Once, and only once, and for one only,
(Ah, the prize!) to find his love a language
Fit and fair and simple and sufficient—
Using nature that 's an art to others,
Not, this one time, art that 's turned his nature.
Ay, of all the artists living, loving,
None but would forego his proper dowry,—
Does he paint? he fain would write a poem,—
Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,
Put to proof art alien to the artist's,
Once, and only once, and for one only,
So to be the man and leave the artist,
Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

IX.

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement!
He who smites the rock and spreads the water,
Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,
Even he, the minute makes immortal,
Proves, perchance, but mortal in the minute,
Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.
While he smites, how can he but remember,
So he smote before, in such a peril,
When they stood and mocked—"Shall smiting help us?"
When they drank and sneered—"A stroke is easy!"
When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,
Throwing him for thanks—"But drought was pleasant."
Thus old memories mar the actual triumph;
Thus the doing savours of disrelish;
Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat;
O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate,
Carelessness or consciousness—the gesture.
For he bears an ancient wrong about him,
Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,
Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude—
"How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and save us?"
Guesses what is like to prove the sequel—
"Egypt's flesh-pots—nay, the drought was better."

X.

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant!
Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven brilliance,
Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat.
Never dares the man put off the prophet,

XI.

Did he love one face from out the thousands,
(Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wifely,
Were she but the Æthiopian bondslave,)
He would envy yon dumb patient camel,
Keeping a reserve of scanty water
Meant to save his own life in the desert;
Ready in the desert to deliver
(Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)
Hoard and life together for his mistress.

XII.

I shall never, in the years remaining,
Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues,
Make you music that should all-express me;
So it seems: I stand on my attainment.
This of verse alone, one life allows me;
Verse and nothing else have I to give you.
Other heights in other lives, God willing:
All the gifts from all the heights, your own, Love!

XIII.

Yet a semblance of resource avails us—
Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seize it.
Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,
Lines I write the first time and the last time.
He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush,
Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,
Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little,
Makes a strange art of an art familiar,
Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets.
He who blows thro' bronze, may breathe thro' silver,
Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.
He who writes, may write for once as I do.

XIV.

Love, you saw me gather men and women,
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,
Enter each and all, and use their service,
Speak from every mouth,—the speech, a poem.
Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving:
I am mine and yours—the rest be all men's,
Karshish, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty.
Let me speak this once in my true person,
Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea,

Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence:
Pray you, look on these my men and women,
Take and keep my fifty poems finished;
Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also!
Poor the speech; be how I speak, for all things.

XV.

Not but that you know me! Lo, the moon's self!
Here in London, yonder late in Florence,
Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.
Curving on a sky imbrued with colour,
Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.
Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,
Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,
Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,
Hard to greet, she traverses the houseroofs,
Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,
Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

XVI.

What, there 's nothing in the moon noteworthy?
Nay: for if that moon could love a mortal,
Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy,
All her magic ('t is the old sweet mythos)

She would turn a new side to her mortal,
Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman—
Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,
Blind to Galileo on his turret,
Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats—him, even!
Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal—
When she turns round, comes again in heaven,
Opens out anew for worse or better!
Proves she like some portent of an iceberg
Swimming full upon the ship it founders,
Hungry with huge teeth of splintered crystals?
Proves she as the paved work of a sapphire
Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain?
Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu
Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,
Stand upon the paved work of a sapphire.
Like the bodied heaven in his clearness
Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved work,
When they ate and drank and saw God also!

XVII.

What were seen? None knows, none ever shall know.
Only this is sure—the sight were other,
Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,
Dying now impoverished here in London.
God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures

Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her!

XVIII.

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!
This to you—yourself my moon of poets!
Ah, but that 's the world's side, there 's the wonder,
Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you!
There, in turn I stand with them and praise you—
Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
But the best is when I glide from out them,
Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
Come out on the other side, the novel
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

XIX.

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,
Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,
Wrote one song—and in my brain I sing it,
Drew one angel—borne, see, on my bosom!

R. B.

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